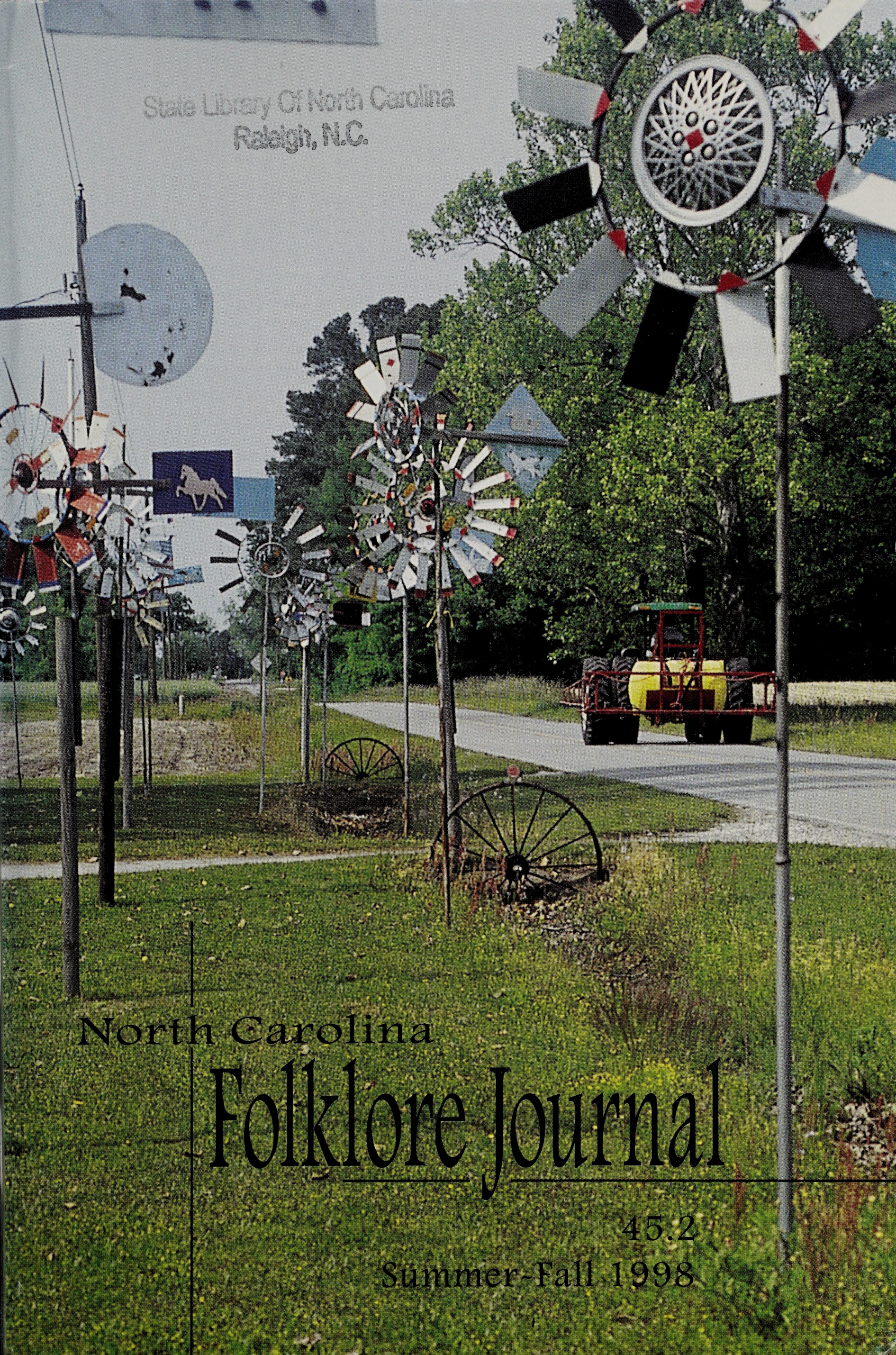




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Folklore Journal

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Summer-Fall 1998

North Carolina

Folklore Journal

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The *North Carolina Folklore Journal* is published twice a year by the North Carolina Folklore Society with the assistance of East Carolina University and through a grant from the North Carolina Arts Council, a state agency.

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The *North Carolina Folklore Journal* publishes studies of North Carolina folklore and folklife, analyses of folklore in Southern literature, and articles whose rigorous methodology or innovative approach is pertinent to local folklife study. Manuscripts should conform to *The MLA Style Manual*. Quotations from oral narratives should be transcriptions of spoken texts and should be identified by teller, place, and date. Submit article queries and manuscripts to Karen Baldwin, Editor, *NCFJ*, ECU Folklore Archive, English Department, GCB #2215, East Carolina University, Greenville, NC 27858-4353.

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Cover photograph: Lester Gay’s decorative windmills, made from
bicycle wheels, hubcaps, and other discarded material, greeted travelers
out in front of his home on Bell’s Road, west of Fountain, Pitt County.
Photograph by Karen Baldwin.

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Editor's Foreword

Editorship of the *North Carolina Folklore Journal* has changed hands, but not heart. Published for nearly a quarter century under Tom McGowan's wise guidance and with increasing support from Appalachian State University, the journal flourished and came to recognition as one of the finest state folklore publications. When Tom resigned as editor and I took on the job, the publication began moving from the mountains to the coastal plain in stages, some planned, others fortuitous. Since 1996, the English Department and the College of Arts and Sciences at East Carolina University generously have supported the *North Carolina Folklore Journal* with released time for my editorship, a graduate student assistantship, equipment, office staff assistance, and supplemental funds. An editor's commitment to such a journal never can be valued only in terms of financial and personnel assistance; but without the solid backing from this university, my editorship would not be possible. ECU is to be commended for its substantial sponsorship, helping to convey the *North Carolina Folklore Journal* safely through the *rites du passage* marking its change in editors.

NCFJ has a redesigned cover and interior and a couple of additional features, but its traditions and mission remain unchanged. Content deals with folklore, folklife, and folk arts in and related to North Carolina. To that end, *NCFJ* publishes articles, photographs, drawings, and transcribed texts from oral performances. Since its inception in 1948, this journal's authors have been academic folklorists, specialists and professionals in other fields, folk artists and tradition-bearers, writers, public educators, even a North Carolina senator and governor. We continue that tradition, publishing authoritatively written and readable articles from a wide range of authors.

North Carolina Folklore Journal has a broad and richly diverse purview. Folk cultural traditions in and related to North Carolina are contemporary, mass mediated, deeply historical, drawn from many world cultures, transmitted in many languages. We share continuities of tradition with neighboring states and with neighboring regions. The dynamic range of *NCFJ* subjects reflects this breadth and diversity.

The previous two issues were special compilations: *A Treasury of Tar Heel Folk Artists: The North Carolina Folk Heritage Awards, 1989-1996*

and *The North Carolina Coastal Folklife Survey*. Both are available separately by mail order from Lucy Allen, Secretary-Treasurer, at the North Carolina Folklore Society address listed on the inside front cover. The current issue gathers together citations for North Carolina Folklore Society Brown-Hudson Awards presented at both the 1997 and 1998 annual meetings. A dual citation for Señoras Hernández and Ocampo, native Mexican fiber artists, appears in English and Spanish, making this the first bi-lingual issue of *NCFJ*.

Treasures of North Carolina folklife fieldwork are cached in archive collections from Boone to Beaufort. With this issue, we introduce a section featuring brief selections from those collections. Here is an edited verbatim transcription of a Carteret County woman's story of the devastating 1933 storm, culled from field interview tapes in the North Carolina Maritime Museum collections.

Finally, this issue took on its memorial theme as news arrived of the deaths of several persons important to North Carolina and folklore. Memorials to Blanton Owen, Leonard Glenn and Lester Gay hold honor with Sally Council's lead article on the tributes left by visitors to the North Carolina Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Raleigh.

Posthumous recognition of folk artists and tradition-bearers is less common than attention paid to the art they produced, to the cultural traditions they retained and reinterpreted during their lives. Folklorists rely heavily on a notion of dynamic tradition, revealed in the performed word, the enacted belief, the holiday feast or jar of home-pickled watermelon rind, consumed with pleasure in cultural contexts. The deaths of those who performed the words and prepared the feasts we enjoyed disturb the tenet of folklore research which holds most sacred our encounters in the field with "living" tradition.

Memorializing death encompasses dynamic cultural acts, of course. Less often is this true with folklorists' attention to the persons who privileged us with their performances and invitations to the feast. Often an asterisk beside the deceased person's name on a roster is the only mark we leave as we turn away looking for new folks to interview, new fields alive with tradition. In this issue, we view memorializations of death from several vantages as well as celebrate the richly diverse performances of persons we still are privileged to encounter, persons whose generous invitations to the feast we are honored to accept.

**“Pieces Torn From Lives”:
The North Carolina
Vietnam Veterans Memorial Collection**
✿ *Sally Council*

On May 23, 1987, the North Carolina Vietnam Veterans Memorial was unveiled on Union Square at the Capitol in Raleigh. More than four thousand people came together in the thick heat of that Saturday afternoon before Memorial Day to honor “those who went,” the 89,000 North Carolinians who served in Southeast Asia during the Vietnam War, and “those who waited,” the families and friends they left back home. At once stately and emotional, the dedication culminated the long and often lonely efforts of a determined Vietnam Veterans Memorial Committee. For five years, Committee members worked to coalesce the grassroots and institutional resources which finally recognized, in this public tribute, the men and women and children of North Carolina whose sacrifice during the Vietnam era and in the years since had been borne alone and in private.

The Committee members lifted the red, white, and blue covering that draped the memorial during the afternoon ceremonies to reveal a bronze statue by sculptor Abbe Godwin of Colfax, North Carolina, cast by the Joel Meisner Fine Art Bronze Foundry in Plainview, New York, the same foundry which cast the veterans statue at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, DC. Entitled “After the Firefight,” the Godwin work depicts two young men soldiers carrying a wounded friend toward a landing zone. The front figure supports the injured man’s leg as he cautiously leads the group forward and the rear figure holds his buddy close as he scans the sky for the arrival of the helicopter. Still and silent in bronze, the men confront us with their predicament. We cannot see and not feel their vulnerability.

The sculpture is an evocative study of American youth in Vietnam. It is a study of collective remembrance. Like Frederick Hart’s “untitled sculpture of three service men” in Washington, DC, “the figures are consistent with history. They wear the uniform and carry the equipment of war; they are young” (Fish 13). They are an ethnic mix: a Native

American, an African American and a European American. They are bonded to each other and to others we cannot see: one wears a wedding band, another's short-timer's calendar shows one month to go before he can return to his family and friends in "the world."

The sculpture's details—the M-16s and bound dog tags, canteens and flak jackets, field dressing and tourniquet, the wedding band and unity bracelet, insect repellent tucked into the hatband, and crossed-off months of the calendar etched into the "short" man's helmet—neither avoid nor glorify the circumstances of war, but serve instead to acknowledge and validate the experience of those who were "over there" and of those to whom they were connected.

Bill Beardall, a Raleigh landscape architect and one of the Committee members, was a Marine helicopter pilot assigned to Marble Mountain Air Facility near Danang, Vietnam, in 1970-71. For Beardall,

It's an incredible tale. A flash, a second. Lightning hits the skies and what you see is this freeze frame of these three men coming out of the bush and they're frozen by time. And that's what you're seeing, catching everything at one time there. So it says that there are no boundaries between men who are fighting, men who are suffering, men who are dying. It's just men. You know?

To pilots, to us, it's a scene we saw so often. Having to carry out somebody who's been hurt, who's dead or dying, and watching the faces of the men who brought him on your helicopter as you fly off. And seeing that pain and anguish on their faces, knowing that they're never going to see this friend again, probably.

And to each one of them—the corpsman out there, the medic...these guys hung the moon. The corpsman's going to see a whole different thing, too. He's going to see one more man that he's patched up and stuck with morphine and said a few choice words over as he left.

The chaplain, he sees another man coming in he's going to have to perform the last rites over or to sit and counsel. The nurse—you know, one more kid...a young boy, a nineteen-year-old boy coming by that she's got to cut open or patch up or whatever. A dolly who has to sit there and hold his hand and help him write a letter to his mom or his girlfriend. ...

To us, to each one of us, it's personal—a very, very personal piece. At the same time, it's obvious that the grass all around the statue is

always trampled down. People gotta have touched it. They cannot *not*. (10 October)

The North Carolina Vietnam Veterans Memorial is one of a growing number of Vietnam veterans memorials built in the United States since 1982; and its story resonates the history of the Wall, the national memorial in Washington, which was dedicated on Veteran's Day in November of that year. Generated by "the same do-it-ourselves activism" which characterized the building of the national memorial and is notable in state and municipal efforts nationwide (Project of the Vietnam Generation 14), the North Carolina project also shares the unifying goals of remembrance and reconciliation. Like other state memorials, ours has become symbolic of a national healing process propelled by veterans themselves.

In North Carolina, it was John Saputo who got things going. Saputo, a former Marine whose orders were canceled while he was on his way to Vietnam, was making good a promise first expressed in Michigan in 1975.

I was at my brother's wedding. He was very proud that I was a Marine officer, and instead of having me wear a tuxedo as an usher, he wanted me to wear my dress blues. I spent the whole day being harassed by everybody, from preachers to the longhaired peace types, for being a Marine. But the straw that broke the camel's back came that night.

I walked into the Hilton in Flint, Michigan, and a drunk came out of the bar. He walked up to me and spit on my ribbons. I proceeded to beat him within an inch of his life. I actually ran his head through a dry wall in the lobby, and they had to pull me off of him. After a day of taking the brunt of everything people had to throw at me, spitting on my uniform was the end.

I went up to my room with my wife to cool off, and this guy tried to have me arrested. Two deputy sheriffs came to the room to arrest me. I told them what happened, and it turned out that they were from Vietnam. They didn't arrest me. We got to talking, and I told them that people just didn't understand and that I was going to do something, like a memorial, to help them understand. (Rogers)

Seven years later, Saputo, a Raleigh businessman, officially proposed the memorial and began a relentless commitment to see it built. He recruited other veterans and non-veterans to the effort and welcomed

volunteers to a newly formed Vietnam Veterans Memorial Committee. One of the volunteers was Steve Acai, Jr., a Raleigh resident who works with the North Carolina Department of Human Resources. A Littleton, North Carolina, native, Acai had been an eighteen-year-old GI in Cam Ranh and Saigon in 1966 and 1967, and had wanted to be involved in a project such as this for several years. Acai recalls:

It was in the fall of the year—must have been '79—and we were at home visiting my mother that weekend.

And Mother said, "Son, here's an article in the paper about a guy that wants to build a memorial in Washington to the Vietnam veterans."

Was just a little blurb hidden in the paper. So I called Directory Assistance in Washington and they did, in fact, have what was called the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund. I had them send me a little bit of information about it and all, because that's a neat idea. That's a good idea.

And I said we ought to have something like that in North Carolina. So that thought kept rolling over and over in my mind, but I didn't know how to build a memorial, or even start on it. ...

Just by a stroke of luck in May of '82, I caught the tail end of a newscast when I was out to lunch about this guy who wanted to do a memorial in North Carolina. So I called [Gail Rancer at WQDR] and I said, "Who's this guy that wants to do the memorial?"

She gave me [Saputo's] name; I called him up, told him that I had some of those same ideas but didn't know how to go about this.

He said, "I don't either; I made the announcement to see what kind of reaction I would get."

So I told him I had served there and I was a native of the state and wanted to help.

And he said, "You're hired. I've got a couple of other people who are interested. We're going to meet tonight. ... Come on out and we'll talk about it."

I guess there were maybe five or six of us. And we sat around, throwing this thing around. We decided then we were going to do it. We didn't know *how* we were going to do it or what we were going to do. But the one thing we knew we wanted was something that would show the people who would come to the memorial what a lot of the men there experienced in Vietnam. And we wanted it to go on the Capitol grounds. We decided that evening we wanted it [at] the Capitol.

Acai's dedication to the project proved pivotal, and his efforts in its behalf are widely recognized. Bill Beardall:

I think that Steve did fifty percent of the work. We all had our jobs that we did. John Saputo was very instrumental in kicking it off and the idea was his, you know. And he got people together who were Vietnam veterans and others who maybe had backgrounds that could help out the Committee.

But you really need that one person who is so into it and so completely involved with it, who can take it on and can do it, and that's basically what Steve did. He traveled all over the state trying to raise money; he traveled to New York to talk to the foundry people. He did all those things, all the legwork and more. He was an excellent spokesman; he writes beautifully. I mean, his whole heart was in it...there's just no way to express it, other than the fact that if Steve had not been part of the Committee, it still would not be done (10 October).

It was not easy work, and it was not unfamiliar territory. With little experience but tenacious persistence, Committee members tackled the tandem process of selecting a memorial design and raising the money to fund its construction. Nine hundred dollars raised with radio station WPTF at a State Fair booth in the fall of 1982 gave them funds to commission miniature models, or maquettes, from two North Carolina sculptors. Abbe Godwin's proposed design was the unanimous choice as Beardall remembers:

When we took off the cloth, I felt seven throats close. And I couldn't get close to it. Nobody could get close to it. I had to just sort of walk around it in a circle and I finally started getting my circle smaller and smaller until I was up close to it. Everybody was just slightly stunned by it. I mean, I was just shaking. That a piece that small could evoke that much emotion. Yet, here it was.

Everything was cleanly done; each weapon was in detail. And she started talking about her process. She had read everything she could get her hands on to read. She had interviewed men. She'd gone by and taken photographs of costumes and equipment and uniforms and this kind of stuff. She had done her research long before we even saw her (5 October).



Photo by Sally Council

To pilots, to us, it's a scene we saw so often. Having to carry out somebody who's been hurt, who's dead or dying, and watching the faces of the men who brought him on your helicopter as you fly off. And seeing that pain and anguish on their faces, knowing that they're never going to see this friend again, probably.

For five years, Committee members crisscrossed the state with the little model of the statue in the backseat, seeking support from veterans' and community organizations and bearing expenses out-of-pocket. They launched a self-supported letter campaign requesting donations. They prepared news releases and promotional ads for newspapers and radio stations. Money trickled in from individuals and families, but response from organized groups was disappointing. Steve Acai:

I thought it would be easy to raise money, that we'd get a lot of support from the recognized veterans' groups, and that we'd have trouble getting the memorial placed on the Capitol grounds. Exactly the opposite happened. We had no trouble getting it on the Capitol grounds, but the money was hard to raise; and we didn't get that much official support from the veterans' groups. Vietnam veterans helped, but we didn't get much statewide. People still didn't want to think about Vietnam veterans. It was still too new for them (qtd. in Rogers).

Then Saputo, a beer and wine distributor, convinced the Coors distributors in North Carolina to donate five cents to the project for every case of beer sold in the month of May 1985. All eighteen distributors participated, and the brewery matched the distributors nickel for nickel. In one month they raised \$42,000. It was the "shot in the arm" the Committee needed and was soon boosted by a \$25,000 grant from the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation.

But the money that assured their ability to realize the memorial came from a source the Committee originally had been reluctant to woo. It came in the form of a \$150,000 legislative appropriation, and it came with Governor James B. Hunt, Jr.'s help. Acai had asked the governor to meet with Committee members for a photo session at the Wall during one of the Governor's trips to Washington, DC. Hunt agreed. Acai again:

The Press Secretary said [Hunt] would have about ten minutes. He actually stayed there nearly an hour and he talked to people who came by and he talked to us.

But his key question was, "How is fundraising coming along, and what kind of support are you getting from the veterans' organizations?"

Well, it was one of those times. You know, now that you've asked. So we told him.

And he turned to [Lieutenant Governor] Bob Jordan and he said, "I wanted a bill introduced in the General Assembly to get these men some money for that memorial."

And about two days later, the State Budget Office called me and wanted to know if we could use \$150,000 for the project.

And I said, "Yes, we can."

And they said, "Well, it will be part of the appropriations bill."

We didn't—this is going to come out wrong—but we didn't want any money from the state up until this point, but we realized by then that we weren't going to be able to do it ourselves.

78 Godwin began work on the sculpture after the Coors money was secured. As she carved and shaped the forms, as the casting was done and the construction site prepared, as plans for the dedication ceremonies were finalized, Committee members found revelations and confrontations of a different sort taking place. Non-Committee participants were touched by the process and found their own involvement assuming new meaning. The face of the man who delivered the sculpture to the construction site, a Vietnam veteran, appeared to be wet with sweat until Committee members realized he was crying. Members of a Vietnam vets motorcycle club came to help landscape the area around the monument. Capitol staff members began a continuing vigil over the memorial. Bill Beardall:

When you've seen something around you that is really mystical, it's almost frightening but at the same time very satisfying. And I could sit there watching this ground being turned up and know something really incredible was going on.

Talk about seeing ghosts, feeling people around you that you knew weren't there; but these people were people, souls, spirits, whatever you want, who were helping us dig the earth, who were helping us pour the concrete, who were participating.

I would go back at nighttime while it was still in its construction and just stand there. Sometimes nothing really came to my mind; just being there was real important to me.

I could feel. I mean, figuratively and literally, the tears would come. There were tears that never showed themselves on my cheeks and then there were the tears that did show themselves on my cheek.

I watched the transformation of that whole place and experienced

what I was experiencing. It was real powerful. ...And it was an appropriate place. It was very sacred. It *is* very sacred. I could feel that ground around me becoming very hallowed ground. ...

I've got some dear, wonderful friends and they've been very supportive of me during all this time. But it was difficult for them to understand why I was involved with something like this, why I seemed to be wanting to keep up with something that was bringing me so much pain.

The wounded man's helmet is inscribed with a "short-timer's" calendar which shows one month to go before he can reutrn to family and friends in "the world."



Photo by Sally Council

I don't think they understood what it was like for us to go through the war and come back, what it was like to even go through the construction of this thing. That's what I don't think they understood—that it was important for me and for some of the other men to hold onto that. We've never been allowed to *publicly*.

And I guess in some ways I wanted them to [understand] real bad. I think I wanted them to not just because of me, but because of what it was and why it was. ...

I don't think a lot of people understand that this memorial is not for me. It's not for Steve. It's not anybody out there. It was for everybody. ...

And it's very important to us for people to understand why it's there, why we did it, why this particular piece, why it's important for *them* to think about it. All they really have to understand is that war is awful. And we have to be real careful before we decide to do it again. (10 October)

People understand. For it is not only in the building of the memorial that North Carolina participates in a contemporary American ritual. It is also in public response to the memorial. With very personal interactive gestures represented by tokens of remembrance placed at the monument by visitors, the people of our state join a fledgling national tradition initiated at—some say permitted by—the Wall.

The wish “to leave a little something there” was an unexpected response to the Wall, but it began even before the memorial was completed. As the foundation was being poured, a man came to the construction site and asked workmen there if he could put his Purple Heart into the wet cement. “He saluted as it slid beneath the surface” (Palmer xii).

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Upon completion in 1982, the Wall was dedicated and opened to the public during a five-day National Salute to Vietnam Veterans which drew veterans and their families to Washington from all over America. Immediately, and spontaneously, visitors to the Wall began to leave mementos—photographs, medals, dog tags, letters, poems, teddy bears—very personal offerings which silently bore witness to the costs of war and to the bonds between its participants. The mementos became a uniquely unsolicited and undirected collective statement. *Maryland Sun* reporter, Gelareh Asayesh, described the collection as, “An amalgam...left by those who were fated to know it best[;] it is the inside story of Vietnam.” Paul J. Fitzgerald, who helped catalogue the collection at the Wall, told Asayesh, “There are things that guys have kept inside their closets and in the back of their brains for years, and there’s something about the Wall that makes them just lay it down. ...These are pieces torn from people’s lives.” (qtd. in Asayesh 1D).

No one planned for the things left at the Wall. Characteristically, and almost predictably, it was through grassroots wisdom and heartfelt sentiment that they came to be saved. Tony Migliaccio, a National Park Service maintenance foreman who headed the crew that cleaned up after the dedication of the memorial, saved the medals people had left behind, “thinking their owners might return to claim them. Nobody ever came back.” Other things were left. It was when “this picture of a guy who looked like he was in California, standing next to a ‘55 Chevy” showed up that Migliaccio told his crew members to save everything. “That hit me” (qtd. in McIntyre D6). “I was touched by it,” said

Migliaccio. "[T]here was something going on here that was bigger than any of us thought it would be" (qtd. in Carlson 36).

Park Service rangers continued to collect the artifacts, daily, and stored them in a tool storage room in East Potomac Park for two years until the Park Service officially assumed responsibility for the collection and moved it to the Museum and Archaeology Regional Storage facility in Lanham, Maryland. There, staff members had registered and stored more than 12,000 artifacts by mid-1989 and continue to receive an estimated 1,000 per month. The Wall has become the most visited memorial in Washington, DC, and the ritual of leaving a token of remembrance remains strong with the visitors. According to Steve Bavisotto, curator of the National Vietnam Veterans Memorial Collection, "momentum, if anything, has grown."

The experience at the Wall has rippled across the nation. At Vietnam veterans memorials throughout our land, local historical societies and veterans organizations and state and city museums and archives have become recipients of collections derived from the same responsive gesture.

Like the national collection, the pieces laid down in North Carolina form a historic mosaic neither conceived nor assembled by a single vision. They have been as carefully chosen as swatches of cloth in a quilt pattern, some painstakingly fashioned in words or material and some impulsively ripped from the moment and memory. Each has been selected in private by a separate individual, then surrendered to a collective collage at the base of a public monument, joining there to become a dynamic folk memorial in concert with its bronze catalyst. Its pieces have come from inside out, but the collection has come from outside in.

Unlike the national collection, artifacts brought to the more recently constructed state and local memorials are neither unexpected nor entirely unplanned for. A special shelf for artifacts was incorporated into the design of New York City's Vietnam Veterans Memorial and documents left there are collected and held with the city's Vietnam Veterans Commission papers in the Municipal Archives. At the 1987 dedication ceremonies of the North Carolina Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Raleigh, an empty artillery box was placed at the statue's base in anticipation of the phenomenon. During the evening after the memorial's dedication, Sam Townsend, the State Capitol Administrator, and Jo Ann

Williford, a State Capitol historian, gathered and recorded the objects that had been left behind. They brought them back to the foot of the sculpture the next morning. For three years, State Capitol staff members collected and dated "memorabilia" as items turned up at the memorial, and they continue to store them in the Capitol until an ultimate official disposition is determined.

Also unlike the national collection, state and local collections are quantitatively contained and therefore can be studied as a whole. Because of the diligence of our State Capitol staff members, we have the opportunity for that study in North Carolina. What is *this* "inside story of Vietnam"? And what is it about our memorial, and others like it, that allows people to "just lay it down"?



Photo by Sam Townsend

... the pieces laid down in North Carolina form a historic mosaic. . . carefully chosen as swatches of cloth in a quilt pattern, some painstakingly fashioned in words or material and some impulsively ripped from the moment and memory. Each has been selected in private by a separate individual, then surrendered to a collective collage at the base of a public monument. . . a dynamic folk memorial. Its pieces have come from inside out, but the collection has come from outside in.

The North Carolina Vietnam Veterans Memorial Collection currently numbers some three hundred items. Their variety testify to Tim O'Brien's observation in his novel, *The Things They Carried*, "...for all the ambiguities of Vietnam, for all the mysteries and unknowns, there was at least the single abiding certainty that they would never be at a loss for things to carry" (16).

The things they carried are often the very things they lay down. Many are military-related memorabilia contributed by veterans. A boonie hat [a brimmed fabric hat] and a camouflage helmet cover. United States Military Payment Certificates and unopened C-rations—a B-2 Unit and a Spaghetti with Ground Meat. Many medals and service ribbons. A pair of Zippo lighters. Unit insignias—1st Cav; 1st, 4th, 9th, 23rd (American) and 25th Infantry; 1st and 3rd Marines; 82nd and 101st Airborne; 173rd Airborne Brigade; 5th Special Forces; 1st Logistical Command; 44th Medical Brigade. Each affiliation signifies a time, a place, a group of young Americans in a distant land. A unity bracelet tightly woven of boot laces. A webbed belt and a D-ring. A tangle of dog tags—two keys and a GI-issued "John Wayne" can-opener still hang on the chain with one pair, and a Peace symbol lies next to another.

There is a plastic flight map of China, Laos and Vietnam with a badge reading "Vietnam 100 B-52 Missions." Fireproof aviation gloves with an attached note, "For Michael who gave his life defending the crew and passengers of Army 61882, Nov. 16, 1969." An eight-inch chunk of twisted shrapnel faintly inscribed in ink "Lt. J. Westbrook, Soviet Rocket Attack, 107mm, 16 June 1969, RVN."

Some donations recall another country and its people, bits of cultural data gathered by those who were there at the time our histories bled into each other. Two yellow and red flags of the Republic of Vietnam, one of cotton, the other pieced and fringed of more ceremonial satin. A 5-dong Vietnamese coin and a 1930 Francoise-Indochine 5-cent coin with a curious hole in the center. A Vietnamese-made Christmas card with a waterside village scene painted on soft pink fabric. A mysterious "Remember Our Children in Viet-Nam" message. A distinctive "Souvenir of the Dega Forever" wreath banner hand-woven by members of the Central Highlands Montagnard community now settled in North Carolina.

The collection yields photographs, poems and letters, which render

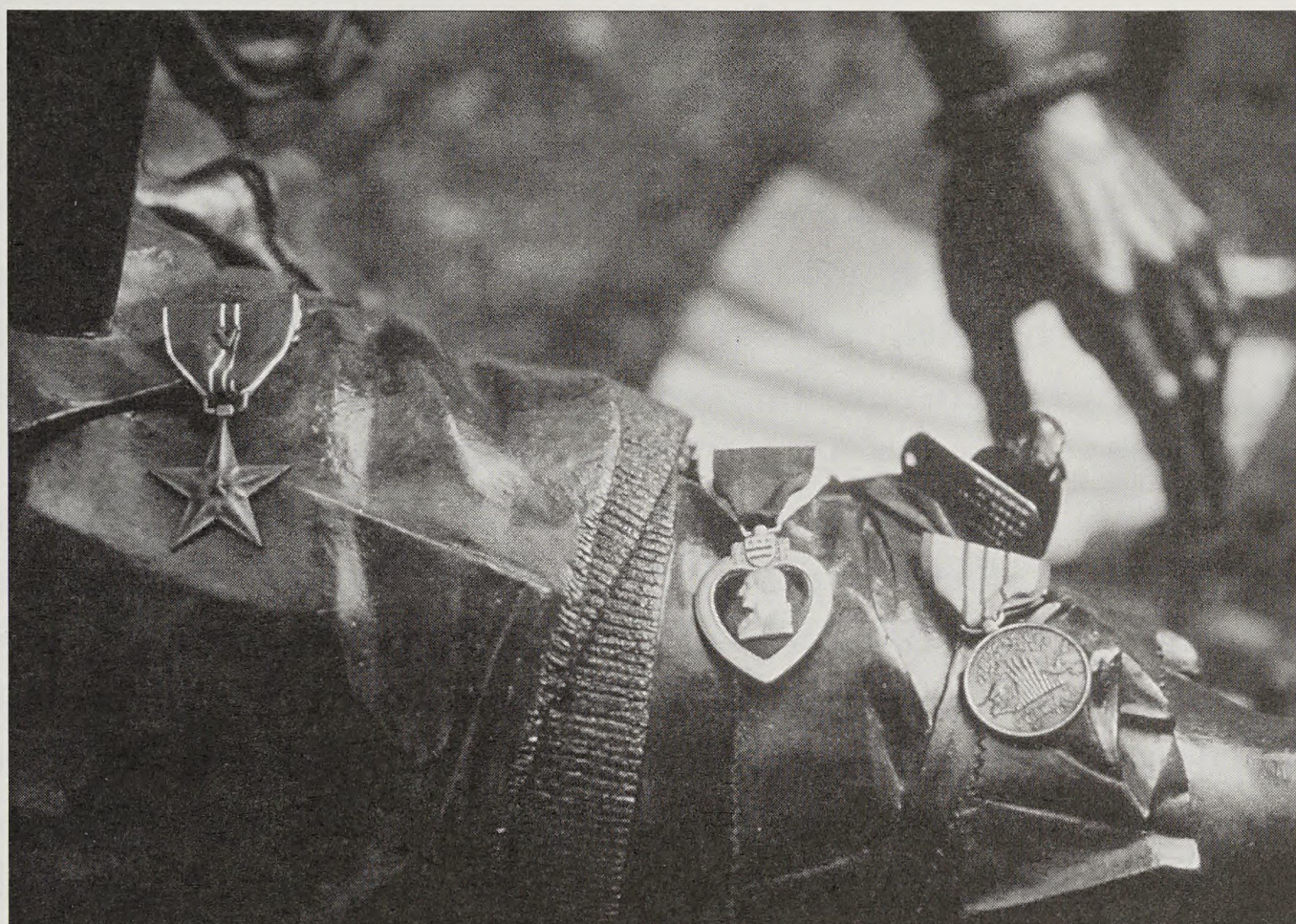
specific physical features and individual sensitivities to a generation called to fight a war our nation did not recognize. They look back, proud and proper, in formal military portraits. They are teenagers, standing bare-chested on beaches or with rolled-up sleeves on airstrips or ship decks, kneeling in front of sandbagged bunkers or sitting astride Armored Personnel Carriers. They age, in tender messages and raw poems that offer grief and rage and deep laughter with the memories. They often speak of an unforgettable intensity compelled by circumstances and youth, an elusive, haunting intensity that stubbornly refuses recapture.

84 Many of the gifts are brought to the memorial not by veterans but by their families and friends, for this space also embraces those for whom the impact of the war in Vietnam has been less direct, but no less inescapable and no less profound. A veteran's sister writes of the night her only brother left home for Vietnam; it was the evening of her high school prom. Another begins, "Ronnie, I never had the chance to tell you what a great brother you were..." The wife of a vet brings a photo of her husband and a friend laughing beside a jungle waterfall; the photo, she writes, is in memory of the friend and "...our youth. ...We were never again children after Vietnam." There is a silver bracelet with a Happy Birthday charm in an envelope on which is written "To David, my husband, my love. I still love you. I always will..." There are laminated obituaries and yellowed news clippings from *The Whiteville News Reporter*, *The Salisbury Post*, *The Raleigh Times*, paying tribute to fallen sons throughout North Carolina. There is a pale blue AFVN [Armed Forces of Vietnam] envelope with a map of Vietnam printed in the lower left-hand corner and a handwritten FREE in the stamp space; it is addressed to a family on Timber Drive in Raleigh. And there is a white teddy bear wearing a USA ski team hat and holding an American flag with a note to "Book, I love you very much and miss you every day. You are truly loved always. Love, Momma."

The scope of the collection encompasses different struggles of conscience, different losses. One letter begins, "I was 18 in 1972. I was totally against the war from the very beginning but never lost respect for my friends and peers who served..." The collection provides a forum for old and continuing tensions; there are messages for [former US Secretary of Defense Robert] McNamara and for "Hanoi Jane" [Fonda], and a note pinned to a cloth name tape: "I went—proud to serve. I was

raised that way. The confusion, lack of commitment, and chaos disillusioned me—a year of my life wasted for politicians and industrialists. Coming home was a slap in the face. I felt ashamed to have been there—I still do. This ceremony is too late.”

The memorial is also a place to remember the fifty-seven North Carolinians whose fate in Vietnam remains uncertain. There are metal POW/MIA bracelets and black and white POW/MIA flags. On each birthday of Lawrence W. Whitford, Jr., and on the anniversary of the day he was declared missing in action, someone leaves a single rose and



85

Photo by Sam Townsend

Medals draped on the NC Vietnam Veterans Memorial at the 1987 dedication—gestures of connection between the living and the dead.

a small metallic card etched with his name, birthday and MIA date. And at noon on the first Saturday of each month, a small group of people gathers to read the names of those not yet accounted for; small American flags and placards with the men's names usually document the ceremony.

The components of the North Carolina Vietnam Veterans Collection are wonderfully, curiously, somberly, even darkly multifaceted. But most significantly, they are there. They form, to modify Barre Toelken's

description of folklore, a tangible “educative matrix” (51). Each artifact, each document, has its own story to tell, yet holds the power to summon countless other stories within its realm. Each tethers a thread that weaves through many more histories than its own. Even the absence of the tale, like holes in lace, is integral to the texture of this communally-woven remembrance.

The artifacts and their stories are the substance of my research, but some understanding of how and why they come to be together in this place is its task. It was the generosity of the action to lay the object before us that originally drew me to this study. The nature and scope of this occurrence seem unprecedented at public monuments in our nation, and has been likened to pilgrimage and votive offering, to funereal and gravesite rites, to purging and cathartic rituals, to grieving and healing traditions. I have heard a few stories to discern theoretical patterns, but certainly the gesture *is* one of connection—between friends, between parents and children, between men and women, between divided communities, between our older and younger selves, between generations.

86 PFC Ronnie Marshall Duncan died in combat near Bien Cat, Vietnam, on October 10, 1965. His mother, Mrs. Evelyn Duncan Griffin of Raleigh, came to Capitol Square early on the day of the dedication ceremonies. She brought Ronnie’s medals, his letter that arrived two days after the telegram notifying the family of his death, and “some other things.” At the base of the statue, she left a laminated obituary and photograph of her son, and an American flag bearing the handwritten inscription “In Memory of PFC Ronnie M. Duncan, 173rd Airborne Div. Died in Viet-Nam Oct. 10, 1965. And all the other Viet-Nam Vets that died for this country.” She said, “I just wanted people to know he went.”

Mrs. Griffin also left a clipped news photograph of Mr. and Mrs. Silas E. Rhodes of Raleigh, the parents of Marine PFC Donald F. Rhodes, as they received the Purple Heart awarded to their son posthumously. Both Mr. and Mrs. Rhodes have died, and Mrs. Griffin “just wanted people to know he went, too.”

In the end, maybe it is just that simple: an individual story, a family story, embraced first by corporate recognition, and then by national history. Before the Wall, there were few places Vietnam veterans felt

free to say, "I was there," or that families felt they could say, "He/She was there." Now there are many. Vietnam veterans and their families created that space for themselves and then invited the nation to join them. Before the Wall, there were few forums for non-veterans and veterans to ask, "Were you there?" "Was your child there?" Now there are many. First the Wall, then state and local memorials throughout the United States, opened the arena, and more importantly, urged its expansion. People responded and, as one result, the North Carolina Vietnam Veterans Memorial Collection invites us to take a good look at and give a good listen to history we have been reluctant to reveal or to see, to tell or to hear. We have much to learn from each other.

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Photo by Tom McGowan

Blanton Owen plays banjo with the late Tommy Jarrell, fiddler, at the July 1976 North Carolina Folklife Festival at the Eno River Park, Durham.

In conversation, Blanton and Malcolm explained that they were visiting musicians in rural communities in North Carolina and Virginia in order to tape record the tunes and preserve them by notating and playing them. They were making an avocation of fieldwork in traditional music that would become Blanton's profession.

Blanton Owen 1945-1998

*memorial by
Gary Stanton*

On June 6th, Blanton Owen, folklorist, photographer, banjo player, met an untimely death while doing aerial photography on an archaeological excavation along Lake Roosevelt in eastern Washington. Far from his parents' home in Sewanee, Tennessee, Blanton was doing the things that he'd always loved, fieldwork and flying. In a half century of life, he'd been collecting friends and tunes among the rural people of America from the East Coast to the West. The weekend following his death, friends and acquaintances gathered to pay their last respects at the High Tower Soaring hangar at the Douglas County Airport, south of Carson City, Nevada. With a small number of folklorists was a host of glider pilots and flying enthusiasts who had come to bid farewell to one of their own. It was certainly as various a herd of people as one would ever hope to meet, yet, in many ways they were typical of who Blanton Owen wanted to be with.

Blanton Owen was born in Charlottesville, Virginia, raised in Sewanee, Tennessee. His father was the chairman of the Biology Department at University of the South in Sewanee. From an early age, Blanton felt the tug of the rich rural culture of southern Tennessee and northern Alabama, and at the same time understood and appreciated the role of education and the written word. His family loved books, reading, and the knowledge that these things brought. Blanton was not a natural student, but he was a student of nature. His love of learning made him a poor classroom student; he was more attuned to field research, especially the richness and vitality of learning from the planet and the people he found around him. His restless habits of investigation sought out the people and things that were not already in books, but made their marks in small and important ways as artists in their own communities.

Blanton served in the Navy from 1966 to 1970. When in port he spent his time with his older brother, Malcolm, playing in a loose group

of musicians that included Bobby Thompson, Vicki Owen, Bill Hicks, and Eric Olson, and became the Fuzzy Mountain String Band. What struck me about the group was their interest in fiddle tunes that were not just old, but learned from living musicians rather than old records. They played tunes on banjos and fiddles with tunings I'd never heard before and tunes whose melodies were strikingly different than what bluegrass and old-time bands like the New Lost City Ramblers were playing. In conversation, Blanton and Malcolm explained that they were visiting musicians in rural communities in North Carolina and Virginia in order to tape record the tunes and preserve them by notating and playing them. They were making an avocation of fieldwork in traditional music that would become Blanton's profession.

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Blanton returned to Tennessee and completed a degree in sociology and anthropology at East Tennessee State University in 1973. During all that time, he had been actively recording and photographing musicians in the mountains and had already produced a twenty-five minute film on Tommy Jarrell and Fred Cockerham of Low Gap, North Carolina. After graduating from ETSU, Blanton and his friend, Tom Carter, a folklorist and member of the Fuzzy Mountain String Band, spent a year under the aegis of a National Endowment for the Humanities Youth Grant, identifying, recording, and photographing traditional musicians in an eight-county area of North Carolina and southwest Virginia. Their work would yield the fine two-volume collection, *Old Originals: Recent Recordings from Virginia and North Carolina*, distributed on Rounder Records.

In 1974, Blanton came to graduate school at the Folklore Department of Indiana University in a unique position. As students, we were there to learn our subjects; but like John Lomax, Blanton was already a much more accomplished fieldworker and knowledgeable scholar of rural life than most of the faculty of the program. The saving grace in this inversion of the teacher-student equation was that Blanton loved to work. Once he set his mind to something he could pour an amazing energy and creativity into any task put before him. To his death he was proud of having worked with a crew pulling railroad ties off an abandoned line near his house at Sanders, Indiana. There can't be a worse summer job, with creosote burning your flesh and the bugs biting what isn't burning. But he liked earning a wage for the value of the work.

Blanton not only collected songs and tunes in Mt. Airy, Galax, Martinsville, and Floyd, he also made many friends with the musicians and local families there. So as often as school could permit, he'd drive south to visit friends, ricocheting around the region from one house to the next, stopping at Ernest East's family, over to Tommy Jarrell's, on to Hus and Joe Caudill, or the Shelor family. With each stop, he checked in, caught up on how everyone was, and anyone with Blanton could see these weren't informants; these were his friends.

By 1978 Blanton had left Indiana and returned to the mountains. He wasn't interested in finding a comfortable classroom, he wanted to work actively researching traditions in music and crafts. He chose a new way of living, to take positions that were temporary with funding from the new National Endowment for the Arts Folk Arts Program. His first job was at the Blue Ridge Institute at Ferrum College in Virginia. Blanton worked with Roddy Moore and others to identify musicians, craftspeople, and artists for the record series, *Virginia Traditions* and for their yearly Fall Festival. Blanton next worked on a team project for the American Folklife Center of the Library of Congress to research traditional life and art along the Blue Ridge Parkway in North Carolina and Virginia. Later he did county architectural surveys for the North Carolina Division of Archives and History, but returned to music and rural life research when he was hired in 1979 by the Mountain Heritage Center at Western Carolina University in Cullowhee. There he worked with Jan Davidson and Michael Ann Williams to produce the Mountain Heritage Day Festival. Blanton helped expand the music and crafts displays from quilting and weaving and other "typical" festival demonstrations to include hand twisted tobacco, moonshine making, and chainsaw competitions that he felt more broadly characterized the life and culture of this part of western North Carolina.

In 1981 he moved again, this time to the Knoxville World's Fair to work with Dick VanKleeck in booking and presenting Southern traditional culture as part of the larger celebration of the region. Blanton brought in craftspeople, artists, and groups he knew from previous fieldwork, including Tommy Jarrell, Red Rector, and Ralph Stanley, as well as other local musicians from Virginia and North Carolina. Moonshiner Hamper McAbee from northern Alabama was there, along with others from western North Carolina and Tennessee.

From Knoxville, Blanton took work with the Florida Folklife Program in White Springs. For four years he poured over Florida, finding rawhiding cowboys and talking to gospel groups and bagpipe players, while researching traditional arts and crafts for the annual Florida Folklife Festival. By 1984, encouraged by his younger brother Ted, Blanton had again begun to fly small planes; and his interest in flying led to his becoming Nevada State Folk Arts Coordinator in Reno in 1985.

It may seem odd that a folklorist who had become so firmly identified with Southern traditional culture would suddenly leave for a place so starkly different. But Blanton had always seen value where others saw emptiness. He energetically researched the traditions of Native Americans, cowboys, casino workers, Basques, and literally scores of other groups representing the richness of the human landscape of Nevada. He developed the Nevada State Folk Arts Program, creating an archive, publications, and a vigorous apprenticeship program.

92 Blanton Owen was at his best as a field worker; and by 1991, he left the State Arts Council to return to the financially precarious life of a folklore and archaeology field worker. His peripatetic lifestyle took him to Fresno in the heart of California's Central Valley; to Idaho, where he worked with Shoshone-Bannock, Paiute, Nez Perce, Coeur d'Alene, and Kootenai peoples; to eastern Montana; and to Elko, Nevada, where he helped organize the nationally known Cowboy Poetry Gathering for ten years. Along the way he'd gathered new skills of archaeological documentation and he supplemented his folklore work with archaeological field surveys, often contributing both the photographic and oral historical components of that work.

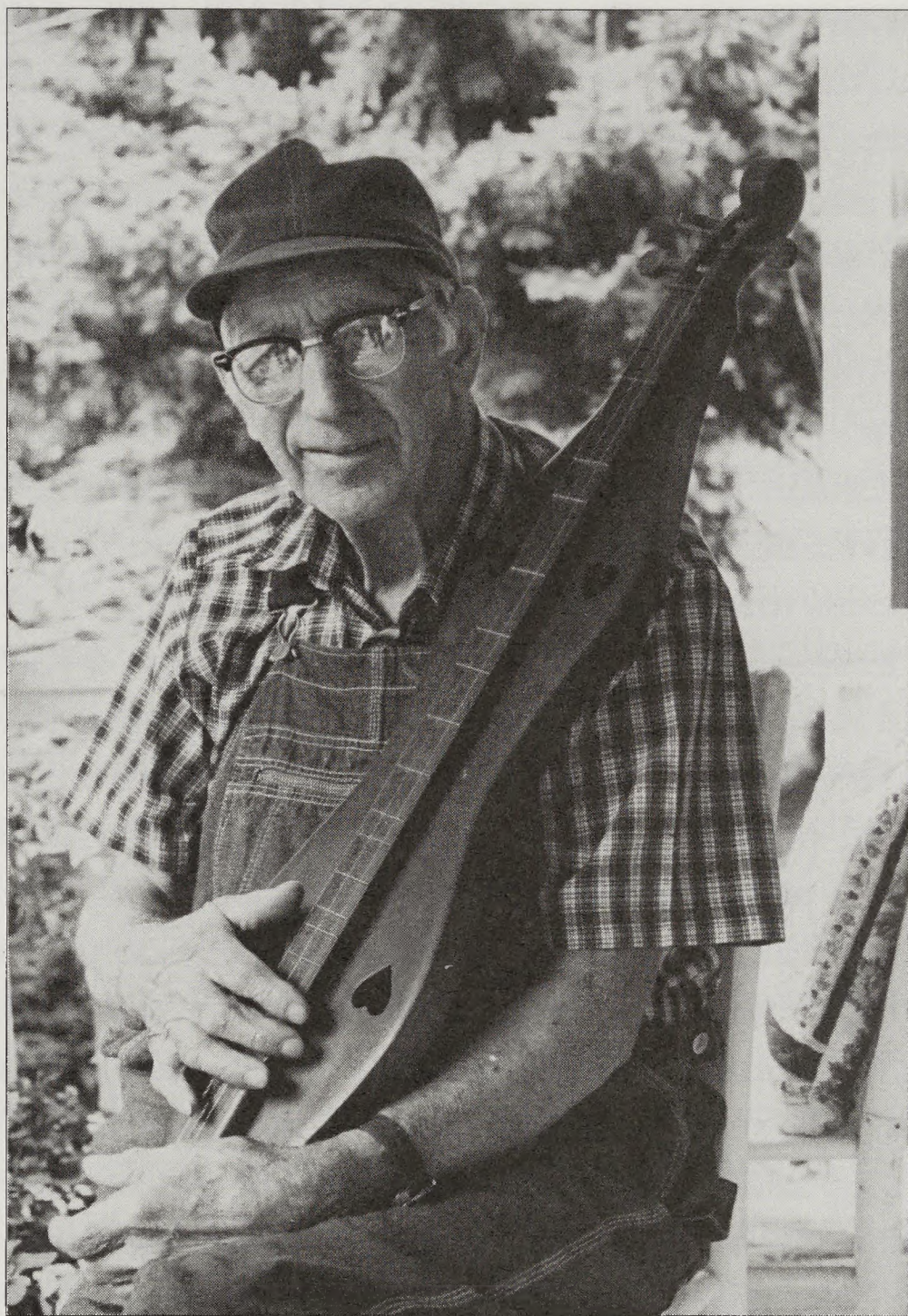
At the end of his life, Blanton was finishing a book on the architecture of ranches in Northeastern Nevada; he was playing in a new band with Tom Carter and Leonard Coulson of Salt Lake City and Tom Sauber of Los Angeles. He'd recently flown his own plane to Alaska over one of the few pieces of wilderness still to be found in North America. He left a legacy of photographs and tape recordings made with people across the United States. He was a tireless field researcher, never settling down, seeking beauty and intelligence in the works of many talented people. He was a folklorist's fieldworker who might have done anything, but chose to live and work to discover and document the craft and the arts of us all.

Leonard Glenn ♫ 1910-1997

*memorial by
Thomas McGowan*

*Leonard Glenn,
Sugar Grove, NC,
1991.*

*Photo by
Mary Anne
McDonald
for the Folklife
Program, North
Carolina Arts
Council, NC
Department of
Cultural
Resources.*



The passing of Leonard Lucky Glenn on April 3 [1997] took away one of the great hands of instrument making and playing in the North Carolina Blue Ridge. Mr. Glenn, a resident of the Laurel Creek community in western Watauga County, was known for the fretless banjos and dulcimers he crafted and his expert playing of both these instruments.

In a small workshop on his farm, Mr. Glenn continued making the traditional Mountain banjo. Fretless neck with wooden pegs, body shaped from local woods, and sounding head covered with groundhog skin, this special form of banjo has become famous among musicians of the Folk Music Revival and enthusiasts of old-time music. And its soft sound and sliding and shaded tones have made it a special part of regional family and community sessions.

During the 1950s, Leonard Glenn also began making dulcimers. In his instrument making and his rigging machines to support his craft, he was a wonderfully adept and inventive man. "I just decided," he said, "to get me some wood and go in on the dulcimer business. And the first dulcimer I ever made, I just studied it out myself and made it." He perpetuated the lovely tapered shape and careful craftsmanship of the Appalachian dulcimer, introduced to his family by Grandpa Eli Presnell, who brought home a Kentucky dulcimer in the 1880s. His homemade instruments became so popular that son Clifford Glenn had to have a telephone answering machine installed to handle orders from all across the nation.

94 | Leonard Glenn played banjo for dances as a young man, and until age diminished his strength, he picked tunes for visitors from near and far. He was a generous sharer of his talents, who taught young musicians the old-time regional styles and sent away all visitors with the special gift of a polished rock from his collection.

In 1992, the state of North Carolina presented Mr. Glenn its Folk Heritage Award for lifetime achievement in the folk arts. Folk musicians, folklorists and his neighbors will long remember the lovely touch he brought to shaping instruments and tunes, the bright sound of his banjo picking, and the sight of him, garbed in overalls and blue baseball cap, working in his one-room workshop—its machines rigged ingeniously with belts and coal piled outside for its stove. We have lost a great hand and presence, but his art lives on in his instruments, his handing on of craft and music to his son Clifford, and the memory of his work.

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Lester Gay 1916-1998

*memorial by
Karen Baldwin*

Out in his yard, Lester Gay waved greetings to every passerby along Bell's Road in front of his house in the Fountain-Farmville area of Pitt County; and he knew most everyone who passed. When Lester wasn't there to wave, his remarkable fields of windmills greeted travelers day and night. Lester's mills always turned, always caught the eye, even if there seemed to be no wind. Mill face blades and tail plates flashed bright planes of primary color and reflected light, the whole array murmured in conversation with the breezes, cast late-afternoon motion shadows in the grass, or suspended glittering swirls of reflected headlights in the darkness along the rural road. Windmills and whirligigs were set up in every quarter of Lester's domain—staggered in rows, four deep along the road, doubled up and down the driveways, hung from tree branches, supplanting rows of peanuts and collards in the garden. Beyond the garden, windmills elaborated each post around the pasture fence, standing sentinels across the green expanse as well, above the grazing cattle, spinning wildly or hardly at all, following the dance of wind, glancing sunlight from each corner of every outbuilding. When Lester Gay died in April, his windmills became part of his legacy to the community, a gesture of friendship and connection, even in death.

Lester Gay created this merry windmill environment late in his life, for his own and others' pleasure, enjoying the process of ingenious design and engineering, and quietly delighting in the æsthetic outcome. A retired tobacco farmer, family man, and friend in the community, Lester had been born and reared in the farmhouse on Bell's Road where he later lived for nearly sixty years, first with his wife, Garnette, raising their own family, then by himself for decades after her death. He missed Garnette every day and talked of her with loving remembrance. "We were married 35 and a half year. Got married in '38, on Christmas Day," Lester remarked, with a sad smile. "I been hangin' on for something, I don't know what. It's lonesome, but I'm makin' out."



All photos in this article by Karen Baldwin

Lester Gay of Fountain, NC, in 1990.

Lonesome for Garnette, but never alone, Lester Gay was surrounded by friends and family. Most of his brothers, his children and in-laws, his fellow-farmers lived in houses visible across pastures and fields in every direction from his own. And his windmills were visible across those same fields. Every day folks would come to visit, trading news from town or about far-flung children, often standing beside the shed where Lester liked to work, conversations there embraced by the colorful motion and gentle friction soundscape of the mills. Lester's windmill environment vitally communicated his sense of community with kin and friend, and was an æsthetic expression of self.

Like other unselfconscious artists whose productions are rooted in traditional forms, such as seasonal or regional yard ornamentation, and inspired by the possibilities for ingenious revisions of those forms, Lester started simply and drew on ideas he first knew as a boy. He'd made windmills with wooden hubs and slat blades when he was young; then in 1987, a date marked in decal numbers on the tail rudder of an airplane atop one mill, he started making mills again—"one right after the other."

Since that time, Lester produced more than 200 windmills and a menagerie of whirligig ducks, geese, and “redbirds,” assembled almost entirely from salvaged materials. By 1990, Lester Gay counted in his garden “three rows of windmills, four rows of peanuts, and about twelve rows of peas.” Lester saw possibilities in wood, plastic, and metal discards, and saved everything in roughly sorted stacks in his outbuildings. A complete list of the materials he reused would be long and never indicate Lester’s clever reconfigurations of all the stuff he salvaged from his community environment. He fashioned his decorative mills from bicycle wheels—with the tires removed, hubs and spokes intact—molded plastic wheels from cast-off toys, wood from fruit crates, vinyl siding, Fiberglas skylight material, mop handles, galvanized roofing tin, the plastic water circulating blades from a dishwasher.

Lester Gay’s decorative windmills were constructed to resemble the working pump yard mills common in the agricultural landscape when he was a boy. Each has a central hub and radiating blades, the blades angled to catch the wind and turn the hub on a horizontal shaft; the shaft fitted with a broad tail surface, vertically mounted, so as to turn the mill with the wind; and the whole unit balanced to rotate smoothly on an upright support. Lester revised elements of this basic yard mill form each time he made one of his constructions, using bold colors and contrasts, intrinsic and applied reflectivity, personal and local motifs, patriotic symbols, and brand logos. He stacked several mills on the same support pole, each sized and balanced differently, each responding individually with the wind; one mill rotated clockwise, another, just above, turned counter the clock. He clustered smaller mills in more confined corridors of his yard, where visitors could walk between the pole supports viewing the mills in the intimate space of conversation. He generously spaced larger mills, some three feet in diameter and four to five feet long, through the pasture, giving each room to be seen that distance from the road.

One mill tail featured the silhouette of a retriever cut from the molded plastic of a bathroom cabinet, painted “golden” and bolted to the tail blade. A prayer plaque from Garnette’s kitchen, a Pepsi brand outdoor thermometer, a piece of highway sign, warning of “high water hazard”—each became a tail to turn mill faces to the wind. Two key rings with plastic fobs dangled like earrings from punch holes in the

bottom edge of a mill tail. The hub covers on mill faces included a plastic lard stand lid, a yellow plastic Crystal Light canister cover, several Chevy hubcaps. Bumper braces from a Model A pick-up were turned to brace a couple of windmill support poles. Squares cut from an old water heater made sturdy tails for several mills, decorated on each side with dog, bull, bird, or Tennessee walking horse motifs. One mill incorporated an electric motor fan; another, the



Lester Gay's windmills greeted travelers day and night.

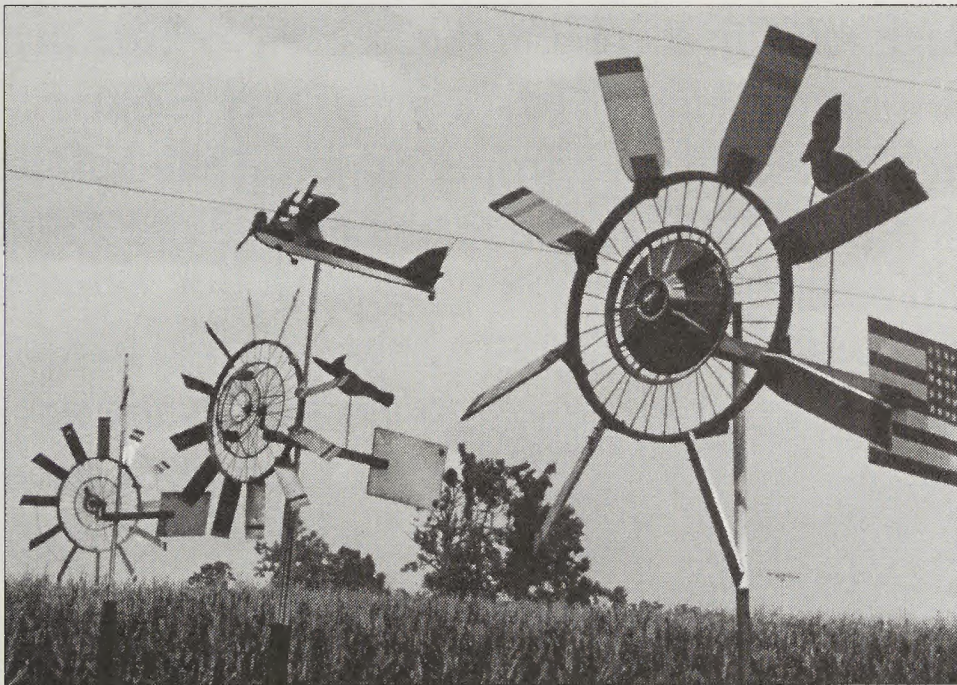
98 | Each year there were new mills, refurbished and redesigned mills. Nothing in the array was static, yet everything was familiar.

When the weather was warm enough and clear, folks usually found Lester out in the shed beside the house where he worked on current projects. They stopped to talk and drop off a bicycle wheel or two, a hubcap, a load of scrap metal. The shed has two walls and two open sides; and when Lester worked there painting a chicken or a cow design on a tail piece or precisely turning and bolting the metal mill blades to the rim of a bicycle wheel, he listened to music from the car radio and occasionally worked past dark with headlight illumination. His windmill and whirligig studio used to shelter family members who were boiling wash in a kettle or rendering lard over a fire in the brick oven. Lester used the oven top plate as a table surface. The two shelter walls were hung with miscellaneous parts for future mills, his few tools, and lathe racks stuffed with cardboard patterns for Tennessee walking horses, roosters, bulls, flying geese with stretched necks, and landing geese with necks slightly curved. When the weather turned cold, he worked spread out on the kitchen table where once his family sat to eat. If Garnette were alive, he reminded visitors to the kitchen, she would want him to

clear the table when he finished. If Garnette were alive, Lester admitted sadly, he would be glad to clean off his “mess.”

All the elements for each mill or whirligig were carefully measured, cut, spray painted with a variety of colors, and balanced just right to turn to the wind on 16 penny nail shafts with plastic tube bushings. Lester’s yard display was a merry sight on a sunny day, even if when the wind was still. But when the wind was “just right,” he said, “about everything up there turns.” His yard full of wind sculptures “[shone] pretty at night, too,” he thought, “when the car lights come on them.”

Lester Gay got the idea for having his windmills reflect car lights from Vollis Simpson, of Wilson County. Simpson’s larger, more elaborate constructions stand outside his welder’s shop near Moore’s Crossroads. “I call him ‘Mr. Windmill,’” Lester once said, admiringly. Vollis Simpson’s windmills incorporate highway sign material for reflectivity; Lester Gay used colored reflective tape, primarily red and white, to edge the blades or to mark the hub centers on his windmills. “And I put it on both sides,” he said.



Lester’s windmill array vitally communicated his sense of community and was an æsthetic expression of self.

“If you don’t put it on both sides, when the windmill’s facin’ the other way, you don’t see it. If you put it on both sides, whichever way the windmill turns, it still reflects. I set out here sometimes in the yard at night, turn on the car lights, set there and watch, when the wind’s turnin’ good.”

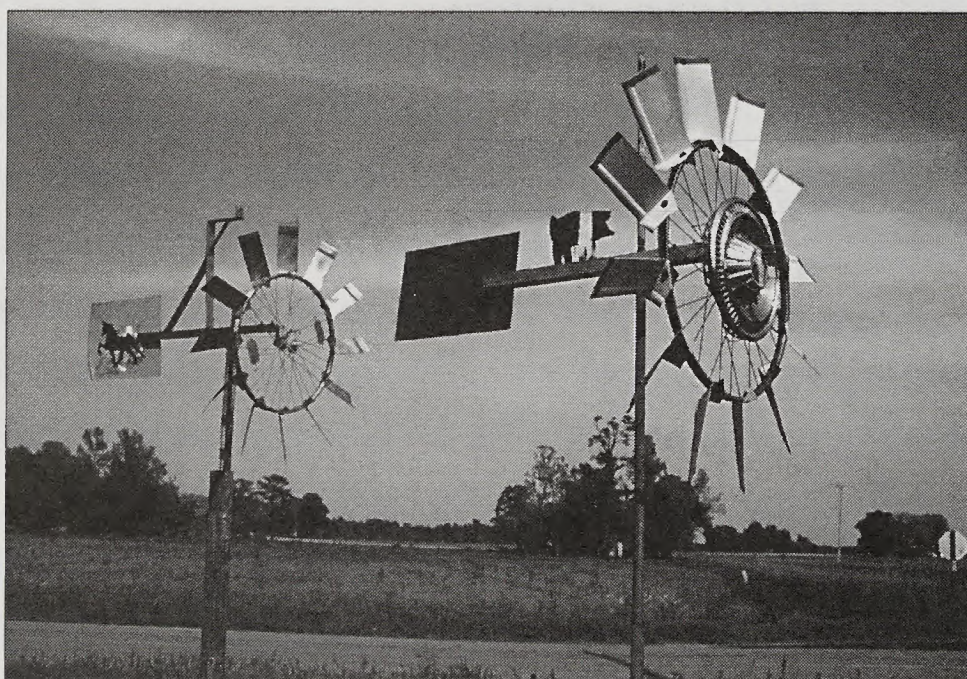
Lester enjoyed his mills, himself; but he always considered his passerby audience and what visual effect the windmills would have for drivers along the road, especially at night.

If you kinda mis-match them, I found out, coming down the road, if you got one right behind each other, you don’t see so

many, but if you got 'em dodged around like that...fella come here one day, he told me, 'It looks like a fair when you come along here at night,' but if you got 'em dodged around and mismatched they will shine more so than if they're one right behind the other. If you come out here, if you pick when the wind's blowin', everything'll be turnin'. I don't know how it is sometimes; it just looks like the wind'll be perfectly still, and there'll be some of them turnin' a little.

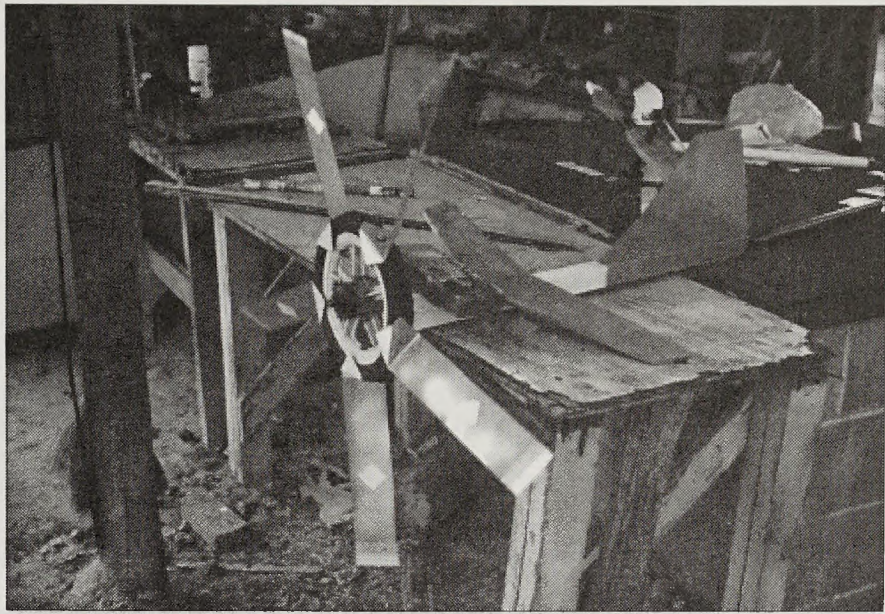
Lester estimated he took a "right good little while" to make a single mill. "A day, if I stay right with it. But I might mess with it two, three days." He described his process for spray painting an American flag on one tail blade to illustrate. "You paint a strip and let it dry; you paint another strip and let it dry; and if you mess up one, then you gotta let it dry and paint it over again."

The first American flag he painted drew some criticism from one of his two sons, Lester recounted with a grin. "He said, 'Dad, you ain't got enough stars on that flag.' I said, 'Doug, I didn't have enough *room*.' Well, if you'd made enough stars on there, the stars'd been so little that they'd been just a dot. So I just put enough to show that they *was* stars." Pointing to another mill with a Stars and Stripes motif on the tail, he finished the story. "I told him, 'This one's got 25 on one side and 25 on the other. The total—you come up right.'"



When Lester Gay died, his windmills became part of his legacy to the community, a gesture of friendship and connection, even in death.

When strangers stopped at Lester's, drawn by the sight of the windmills, they often asked "Are they for sale?" and "Will you make me one?" Lester chuckled to remember the barber's complaint in nearby Fountain, "You know, I wish you'd put a sign up: Not For Sale."



Lester's last mill. When he died, there were dozens in production or awaiting repair stored in his sheds.

People ask[ed] him, 'Are the windmills for sale?'" Lester joked, "They ain't much money in windmills...if you don't sell 'em." He never did sell one, and only occasionally gave one away. His analogy was humorously understated. "It's like a baby. A couple has a baby; they want to keep it. They have another baby; they want to keep that one, too."

Storm wind damage was always a hazard for the windmills, so was theft. Lester Gay used to take all his mills off their nail shafts and "put them up in the tobacco barn" before a storm. But because of his heart trouble and after one was "borrowed" in the middle of the night, he started to follow advice from Vollis Simpson. "'Gay,' Simpson told him, 'you got to *bolt* 'em down, or they'll carry them off.'" Lester shook his head and said, with a kind smile, "I hated to say they stole it, so I say they 'borrowed' it."

Vandalism and his bad heart never discouraged Lester's will to incorporate new mills and expand his wind-powered greeting environment. There were 117 poles in place when he died, many fitted with multiple mills. Dozens of mills in production or awaiting repair were stored in sheds, and two in process on his workbench, paint drying, would forever need final fastenings.

Lester Gay shared his windmill array in several ways while he lived. He welcomed classes from East Carolina University. He appreciated a video documentation of his windmills done by the ECU Folklore Archive and a profile of him and his mill making published in *Folk Arts & Folklife in and around Pitt County: A Handbook and Resource Guide*, 1990.

When the invitation came to display some mills at a festival in Greenville as part of the North Carolina Folklore Society annual meeting, Lester took the challenge. He and son Doug fashioned cement block bases for several poles mounted with multiple mills, trucked them across the county, and assembled them for the day on a spread of lawn beside the building where the festival was held. Lester really enjoyed himself that day. He visited inside with other folk artists and musicians. He savored the fried herring and hush puppies cooked at the festival by the Sharp Point Volunteer Fire Department. He spent time with his neighbor and good friend, Leroy "Shorty" Ellis—a toy and whirligig maker—whose jig-cut and painted figures milked cows, washed clothes, and chopped wood, all animated by the breezes off the parking lot. He sat with his family members on the tailgate of the truck, watched the mills spinning in the sunshine, and saw the pleasure evident in the faces of passersby.

102 As much as Lester knew others enjoyed the windmills at his house, he also knew no one else would want to care for them, keep them in repair. Before he died, Lester Gay decided his legacy of windmills might benefit the community where he and his family lived for generations. Lester never sold a mill, but in recent years had donated specially-constructed mills to the Fountain Rescue Squad for fund-raiser auctions.

After he died, family members selected keepsakes from the collection; several friends received mills as gifts. Alex Albright, the new owner of a Fountain storefront, acquired eight mills to display at his Main Street building as a representative sampling of Lester's work. All the remainder were bequeathed to the Fountain Rescue Squad.

Lester Gay's windmills were to be shared with people important in one's life. I took my mother and sister there when they visited from Philadelphia. When we were dating, my husband, Ernie, and I repeatedly visited Lester and his mills. Lester couldn't come to our wedding, but we took our first grandchild and her mother out to see him and the windmills when they came to town. I treasure the snapshot of bald-headed baby Sarah in Ernie's arms, surrounded by Lester's mills.

After Lester Gay's funeral, Ernie and I documented the collection, taking photographs and notes, tape recording descriptions of each mill. It was a sad task in a place still marvelous with movement and color, still alive with Lester's creativity, still colorful and flashing, softly creaking and whirling in the wind, casting long shadow silhouettes on the grass beside the road.

Gladys Salter's story of the storm of '33

Gladys Salter, like many coastal residents, is cued by personal memorabilia linked to the storm of '33 to remember details of her life during the intense long hours until this second storm of that hurricane season swept through the Core Sound communities Down East, lingering through the night of September 15, threatening her family and killing her aunt. Aunt Ella had a fiddle, and Gladys learned to play fiddle with her aunt's inspiration. When two folklorists came by in 1988 to talk about fiddling and music in the South River area, Gladys cheerfully demonstrated her tunings and played a few tunes. But along with the music came a memorat, the sad narrative of a life-changing experience, revisiting her last memories of Aunt Ella, Aunt Ella's fiddle, and the community music of her then young life.

Recorded June 21 at her home in Atlantic, Carteret County, NC. The Coastal Folklife Project collection, which includes Gladys Salter's interview, is held at the NC Maritime Museum, Beaufort. Fieldwork by Wayne Martin, Michael and Deborah Luster. Transcription by Karen Baldwin.

Gladys plays chorus of "Get Along Home, Cindy, Cindy"

Wayne Martin asks about her aunt who died in the hurricane.

The '33 hurricane. Well, she lived to South River. And, of course, I was livin' there, too. But the times were tough. (She laughs lightly.) That was during the Depression, I reckon. An' she and I had both planned to go to New Bern to look for a job; she lived to Bridgeton, originally. She lived there; then her daughter died and she come down to South River. She moved to South River; she was Papa's sister.

Papa built her a house; he cut logs off of his own lot, his own land, and had 'em sawed and built her a house after her daughter died; and she come down there to live. But she still had a house in Bridgeton. So we'd planned to go to New Bern and look for a job, and the storm was a-brewin' then; that was on, possibly, a Wednesday, I don't remember, but I do know the worst of the storm come on the 15th of September in '33. So I don't know, she wanted me to go on to New Bern to look for the job and stay in her house; 'course there was some people livin' in her house;...we knew the people...an' I was gonna stay there and she was gonna come a day or so later. So I went. And, of course, while I was there, the hurricane came an' I was in her house in Bridgeton, stayin' with those people, and the water, then, come up to the porch, so the man took his skiff and tied to the porch post.

Oh, it was bad to South River. Anyway, Aunt Ella died. They claimed she got drowned, but she couldn't have in a way; I think she had a heart attack because her house come off of the blocks, an' I think I was...taller than she was. Anyway, the mark on her house...seemed like it took me to my chin.... But I think she musta had a heart attack, because that night...Papa had lighted the lantern, an' it was gettin' so bad, he begged her to go over there with them...see we had a upstairs. An' she wouldn't go (sighs lightly). Said she wanted to stay and look out for her things. So the water kept going; and the last time Papa was over there the wind blowed his light out, his lantern, an' the logs was...a-floatin' by, so he didn't go no more. But her light burned all night, sittin' on the incubator. She had a [poultry] incubator in there, and she had the lamp a-sittin' on the incubator. And that burned all night. So they figured she was all right...long as the lamp was burnin'. Long as they could see the light, they felt better satisfied about her. But as soon as it got light enough over there, the next morning, I don't know how light it was, but, anyway, the water had got down to about knee deep, so Papa ...said. And she was a-floatin' on top of the water.

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Course, I didn't know nothin' about it right then; there was no way for me to find out right then. I don't remember just how I did find out; somebody had gone by boat, I think, to Bridgeton, New Bern, or somewhere. Anyway, it was Sunday. I think that was Friday when the worst of the storm come. I went on a Sunday, by boat; stopped to Adams Creek, then I walked the four miles in home and there was chickens and everything layin' around, where they had drowned. It was a bad lookin' sight. Course, Aunt Ella...they had got their road gang to cut the trees and stuff out of the road; they'd already buried her. So I turned around and went right back to New Bern. But I don't think I got a job. Don't seem like I did. I had worked there one time, to the Sewing Room, but I don't believe that was the time. I don't think I got a job; I think I come on back home.

Wayne Martin: What happened to your aunt's fiddle?

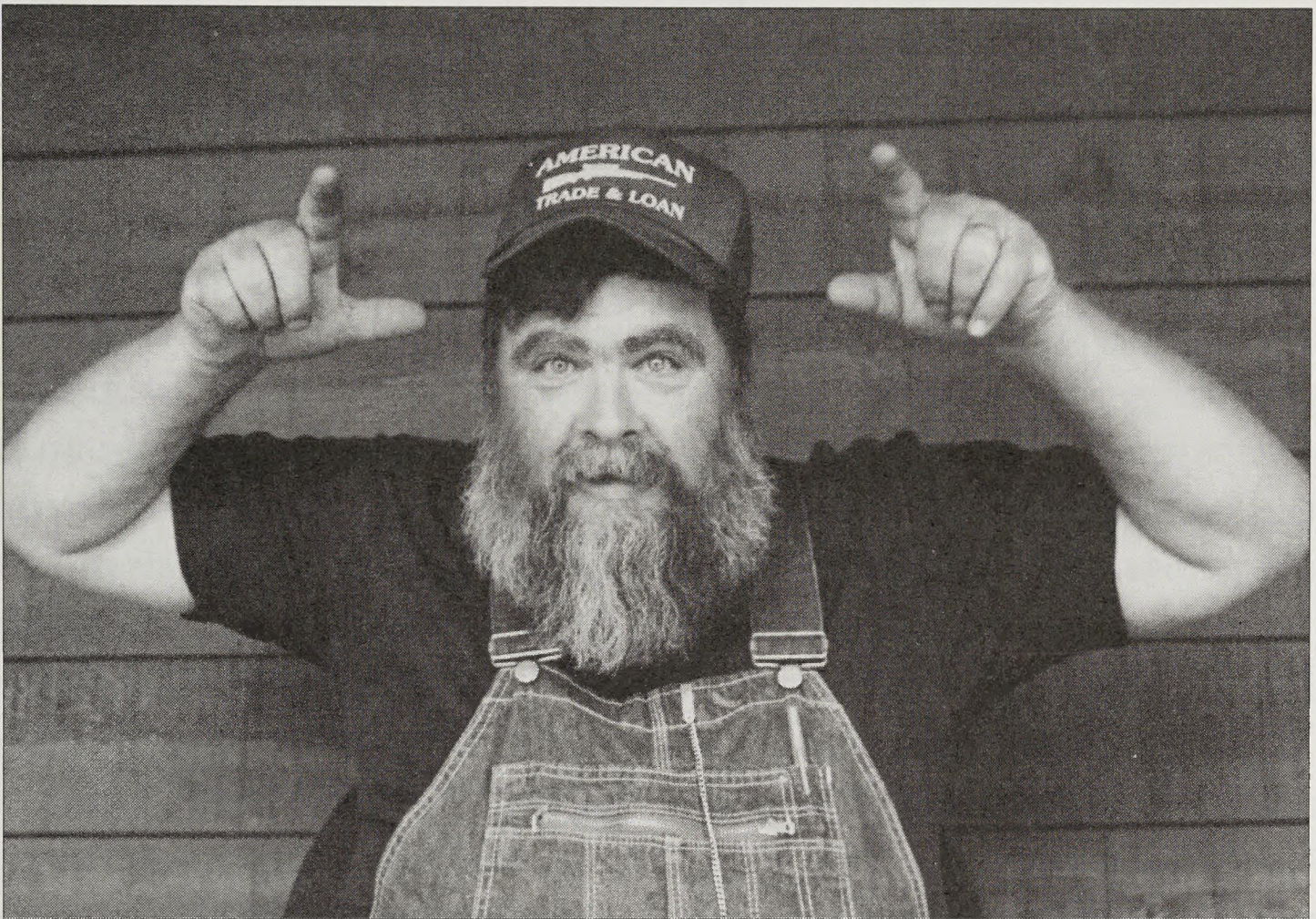
My children tore up her fiddle; finally knocked it around, beat it around, 'til the tail piece come off it.

Wayne Martin: When did you learn to play?

Well, really, I started, two, three years ago, maybe it's been. My granddaughter, goin' to school out here, she wanted to take violin lessons. So I bought her a violin, paid on it monthly. Paid \$200 for it. Well, first, before I got her the violin, she was takin' lessons, and she brought the violin home with her that belonged to their school. Well, I started messin' with it a little bit. I still can't play. No, I never used to play before. But I used to try on that one Aunt Ella had.

Orville Hicks 🐾
Appalachian Storyteller

citation by
Thomas McGowan



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Photo by Thomas McGowan

Orville Hicks catches us into his story world with powerfully infectious laughter.

Jack Tale teller Orville Hicks of Deep Gap, Watauga County, continues an important tradition of North Carolina narrative and brings to it a personal creativity that enriches the tradition and enlivens its form and function in present-day contexts.

The Jack Tale has played an important role in North Carolina's folk heritage. In the late eighteenth century, these stories of a youngest son seeking his fortune were a popular feature of Anglo-American oral and broadside literature. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, they became the basis for a cycle of stories about Jack among members of the Hicks and Harmon families near Beech Mountain in Watauga County. So rich was the development of this local verbal art tradition

that folklorists categorized these tales as Beech Mountain Jack Tales, and they have become the subject of considerable collecting activity and study. They also gained significant popularization through two books by Richard Chase, *The Jack Tales* and *Grandfather Tales*, and through public performances by notable Hicks-Harmon tradition bearers and revivalist storytellers.

Orville continues two important chains of transmission of the Beech Mountain Jack Tale, and he is also a bearer of other regional narrative traditions. His mother, Sarah Ann Harmon Hicks, told tales for her children as nighttime entertainment and to pass time while they were doing tedious farm work. Orville remembers particularly her telling stories to keep the children happy while bundling galax for delivery to a marketer in Avery County and while preparing farm produce for canning and drying. To Orville's repertory, his mother's storytelling contributed the classic "Jack and the Heifer Hide" and "Jack and the Giants," and other children's tales, some of which Richard Chase called "Grandfather" tales.

106 As a young man, Orville was also a frequent visitor to the home of Ray and Rosa Hicks, who lived over the ridge from his homeplace in Rominger. Their home was a notable setting for the performance of tales and songs, and the presence of Orville and friends became occasions for folktale performances. While this context provided continuing validation of Ray's tales, it also provided a scene in which Orville learned and practiced the Beech Mountain Jack Tales. By his visits with Ray, Orville served an informal apprenticeship. Orville has also often driven Ray to public performances and observed and then participated in tale telling there. National Folk Heritage Fellow Ray Hicks encouraged Orville to develop his own style and repertory, helped book public performances, and began suggesting Orville as a substitute when ill health or distance prevented Ray's going. Orville, in fact, represented Ray at the North Carolina Folk Heritage Awards in 1991 and accepted the award certificate for Ray.

From this apprenticeship with Ray, Orville has continued the well-established reputation of Ray and Stanley Hicks at festivals and school performances. He has become a regular performer for groups visiting the Appalachian Cultural Museum in Boone, and George Holt asked Orville to provide a story-preamble for the workers and performers at

the 1996 NC Stories festival-opening of the new Museum of History.

Notable characteristics of Orville's performances of the Beech Mountain Jack Tale are his restructuring these Märchen for shorter performance settings and the rapport with audiences realized by his spirited laughter and use of humorous personal experience stories and jokes to recontextualize the older stories. He has also participated in modern adaptations of the traditional Beech Mountain tales to other artistic contexts, including work with Caldecott Award author Gail Hailey on a dramatic puppet show of "Jack and the Giants" in Boone (in which he played a bearded giant and accidentally knocked over a table in a memorable action-filled scene).

Orville's work in other traditional verbal art genres is also notable. In his family, social, and work groups, he plays a special role. Conversations with Orville become extraordinary because of his ability to work stories into everyday discourse. Fellow workers and social acquaintances often enjoy Orville's taking a tall tale motif and incorporating it into a joke on himself. He also has a special skill of using a local story or a joke to foster group relationships and connections with the local past. A new context for his verbal art is Orville's job as a supervisor at the US 321-Aho Recycling Station between Boone and Blowing Rock. Orville greets all kinds of people there: locals, summer residents, tourists, and Appalachian State University students. These encounters have become contexts for stories and jokes by Orville so that a modern recycling site has become a community institution continuing some old functions of connection expressed by bygone country stores.

Orville Hicks preserves a treasury of traditional folklife—most notably the Beech Mountain Jack and Grandfather tales, rural Southern jokes, and tall tales—but he also continues an important folk role long associated with the Hicks and Harmon families. Richard Chase remarked on the family and community appreciation of Council Harmon and his descendants as entertainers, folk performers who love fun and weave tales for the enjoyment of listeners. Like his distant cousins Stanley and Ray Hicks, his mother Sarah Harmon and her father Kel, and other especially skilled family raconteurs in Counce Harmon's line, Orville Hicks occupies a role traditional to communities and families—the especially skilled storyteller who renews connections within a folk group

but also with larger groups. He has filled that role in new contexts and has contributed to the preservation and new development of the verbal art heritage of the Mountains and of our state.

He is an excellent example of "tradition bearers [who] appropriated and shaped such stories...by transforming them into personal versions within the limits of personal creativity that tradition permits despite its commitment to continuity and its resistance to change" (Nicolaisen 124). What is most remarkable about Orville Hicks, however, is the bright delight he brings to the enactment of this process. He is a tale teller who probably enjoys the joke as much as his listeners and catches us into his story world with powerfully infectious laughter that punctuates his tales.

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**Señora Nazaria Muñoz Joaquín de Hernández
& Señora Ereneida Duarte de Ocampo**
Embroidery and crochet artists

citation by
Kate Hanser

The two women I would like to honor represent one of the most recently arrived and fastest growing communities in North Carolina, according to censuses showing demographic changes in this state. I had the opportunity to get to know these delightful women through a fieldwork project conducted for an exhibit of traditional textiles from Spanish-speaking communities, presented at the 1996 Festival for the Eno. Siler City and Pittsboro happened to be the areas where I worked; and through attendance at local churches there, I was fortunate enough to be put in contact with these women.

Señora Nazaria Muñoz Joaquín de Hernández originally resided in the state of Zacatecas, Mexico, and came to North Carolina in 1992. Now she lives in Siler City with her husband Calixto, several of their children and other members of their extended family. She is a master embroiderer and crocheter who also maintains a rarely practiced fiber art called *deshilado*. *Deshilado* literally means “unraveling” and involves a process by which she removes threads from a piece of fabric and sews the remaining ones into intricate patterns. She learned these skills at home and at school as a girl, and she has taught her daughters and her 11-year-old granddaughter many of her techniques. Having been an eager, if clumsy, pupil of Señora Hernández, I can vouch that the care and attention she puts into her work she also applies to her instruction. I still don’t hold a crochet needle correctly, but I’m working on it.

A visitor to the home of Señora Hernández clearly sees she quite deservedly takes a great deal of pride in her handiwork. She uses many examples of her work, such as embroidered placemats and napkins, as part of her regular domestic routine, and she displays other items, including some stunning *carpetas*, or doilies, as part of her home decor. Señora Hernández commented to me that some people have asked why she squanders her time and sight on the production of embroidered and crocheted items. She doesn’t find these endeavors a waste of her



Photo by Kate Hanser

La sra. Nazaria Muñoz Joaquín de Hernández.

time and seems to greatly prefer her own work to the vastly inferior things she could purchase.

Señora Ereneida Duarte de Ocampo came to the United States from Mexico's state of Michoacan and resided in California for several years before moving to North Carolina two years ago. She lives in Siler City with her husband, Mario; their two sons, Edgár and Eric; and

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other family members. She attends the Pittsboro First Baptist Church, where I first met her. Like Señora Hernández, Señora Ocampo learned her skills as a young girl in Mexico, where her older sisters and cousins taught her how to embroider and crochet. Family ties remain strong, for Señora Ocampo still receives many of her embroidery materials from family in California, materials that cannot be found in North Carolina.

Señora Ocampo makes and sells pairs of pillowcases embroidered with a variety of designs she memorized in childhood. She embroiders tortilla wraps and crochets *carpetas* (doilies). Her primary market has been within her own community, especially for the *almadonas bordadas* (embroidered pillowcases), which other women buy as wedding presents for newlywed couples. She also makes items for home use as well, including a cover for the family VCR.

Both Señora Hernández and Señora Ocampo actively contribute to the maintenance of traditions learned and refined within their own communities, fiber art traditions which each woman clearly values and which many members of their communities also appreciate. These two Brown-Hudson Folklore Awards bring well-deserved, timely recognition both to Sras. Hernández and Ocampo, as individual folk artists, and to their communities whose presence in North Carolina can only serve to enrich the state.

**La señora Nazaria Muñoz Joaquín de Hernández
y la señora Ereneida Duarte de Ocampo**
Artistas de Bordadora y Tejedoras a Crochet

*traducción por
Ana Cowó y Ellyn Felts*

Las dos damas que voy a honrar representan a una de las comunidades más recientes y de crecimiento rápido en Carolina del Norte, según el censo de cambios demográficos de este estado. Tuve la oportunidad de conocer a estas encantadoras damas mediante un proyecto de trabajo conducido para una exhibición de textiles tradicionales de comunidades que hablan español, y presentado en 1996 en el festival para el Eno. Da la casualidad que Siler City y Pittsboro eran las áreas donde yo trabajaba y asistiendo a las iglesias locales, tuve la fortuna de conocer a estas damas.

La señora Nazaria Muñoz Joaquín de Hernández es del estado de Zacatecas en Méjico. Ella se mudó a Carolina del Norte en 1992 y ahora vive en Siler City con su esposo Calixto, varios hijos, y otros miembros del clan familiar. Ella es una experta bordadora y tejedora a crochet y también practica un arte de fibra, muy poco común, llamado deshilado. La palabra deshilado significa reducir una tela a hilos, y el arte consiste en remover unos hilos de la tela y coser el resto en diseños complicados. Cuando era niña, ella aprendió esta técnica en casa y en la escuela. Ha enseñado muchas de sus técnicas a sus hijas y a su nieta de once años. Habiendo sido una estudiante muy entusiasta, aunque un poco torpe, puedo dar fe de que el cuidado y la atención que ella pone en su trabajo, lo aplica también en su instrucción. Todavía no sujeto corréctamente la aguja de tejer, pero estoy procurando.

Un visitante a la casa de la señora Hernández puede ver que ella está orgullosa de su trabajo. Ella usa ejemplares de su trabajo como manteles, y servilletas bordadas como parte de su rutina doméstica. También decora su casa con otros artículos como deslumbrantes carpetas. La señora Hernández comentó que algunas personas le han preguntado porqué desperdicia su tiempo y vista haciendo tejidos y carpetas. Ella no considera estos esfuerzos como pérdida de tiempo y prefiere sus propios productos y no compras de ínfima calidad.

La señora Ereneida Duarte de Ocampo vino del estado de Michoacan en Méjico y vivió en California por siete años antes de mudarse, hace dos años, a Carolina del Norte. Ahora vive en Siler City junto con su esposo Mario,



Photo by Kate Hanser

La sra. Ereneida Duarte de Ocampo & Edgár, 3.

sus dos hijos, Edgár y Eric, y otros miembros de la familia. Ella asiste a la iglesia Pittsboro First Baptist Church, donde la conocí. Igual que la señora Hernández, la señora Ocampo aprendió sus técnicas en Méjico cuando aun era joven. Sus hermanas y primas le enseñaron a bordar y tejer a crochet. Los lazos familiares siguen firmes porque la señora Ocampo siempre recibe, de sus familiares en California, muchos de los materiales para bordado que no se pueden conseguir en Carolina del Norte.

La señora Ocampo hace y vende pares de almohadonas bordadas en varios diseños que ella memorizó durante su niñez. Ella también borda envolturas para tortillas y carpetas de crochet. El mercado principal para sus productos, especialmente para las almohadonas que otras mujeres compran como regalo para parejas recién casadas, ha sido la comunidad donde ella vive. Ella también hace artículos para uso doméstico como cubridores para video caseteras.

Las señoras Hernández y Ocampo contribuyen al mantenimiento de tradiciones aprendidas y refinadas en sus propias comunidades. La tradición de arte de fibra es claramente valuada por cada mujer, y apreciada por muchos otros miembros de la comunidad. Estos dos premios Brown-Hudson Folklore Awards reconocen a las señoras Hernández y Ocampo como artistas folklóricas, y también a la comunidad, cuya presencia en Carolina del Norte enriquece el estado.

Trudier Harris 🐼

Scholar, folklorist and teacher

citation by

Charles G. Zug III

Trudier Harris is a porch sitter. Not a porch starer, but a porch sitter. Now, if you don't know the difference between the two, you'd better read her article on "Porch Sitting as a Creative Southern Tradition" in the latest issue of *Southern Cultures*. And it's got pictures in it, too.

A porch starer doesn't amount to much. It's just someone who sits on a porch and passively watches the world go by. But the porch sitter takes an active role. She talks, she sings, she shouts, she taunts, she cajoles, she acts. In other words, she engages the world with energy and humor and intelligence. To me, those are the very qualities that define Trudier.

Trudier first learned about the world from her front porch in Tuscaloosa, Alabama. There, she helped her mother shuck corn and shell peas; she watched her neighbors court and fight; she enjoyed the high speed car chases along the road in front of her house; and she listened to all sorts of jokes and fantastical, exaggerated stories, the kinds of tales that Southerners love. A porch, as Trudier puts it, is a "wordshop"; it's the "original grapevine"; it's "the border between the 'real' world and the world of storytelling."

Trudier stepped down off that front porch and went to college, first to Stillman College in Tuscaloosa, then to Ohio State. There she nurtured her early interests by studying American literature—particularly African-American literature—and, of course, folklore. Her dissertation suggests her future interests. She worked with folklorist Pat Mullen and wrote on "The Tie That Binds: The Function of Folklore in the Fiction of Charles Waddell Chesnutt, Jean Toomer, and Ralph Ellison."

After graduating, Trudier headed right back down South—much of the year it's too cold to sit on a porch in Columbus. Probably not much to look at either. She taught for six years at the College of William and Mary, and then in 1979 she became a Tar Heel. A hard-working and

prolific scholar, Trudier has produced an admirable body of scholarship: numerous volumes on African-American literature, including *Black Women in the Fiction of James Baldwin* and *Fiction and Folklore: The Novels of Toni Morrison*. She's also written a wide range of articles in folklore on Moms Mabley, telephone pranks, African-American humor, "The Yellow Rose of Texas," and even an essay in the *Journal of American Folklore* on what a genre is. And, of course, her most recent book is entitled *The Power of the Porch: The Storyteller's Craft in Zora Neale Hurston, Gloria Naylor, and Randall Kenan*.

Trudier has also distinguished herself as a teacher in the Department of English and Curriculum in Folklore (for which she teaches Afro-American Folklore and Women in Folklore and Literature). Her students praise her lively, animated style; her forceful delivery; and her ability to make everyone feel at home in her class. She's also a very supportive mentor, one who praises good work but challenges for more. And she occasionally feeds her class, not just ideas but food. One student recalls a "soul food blowout" where Trudier served spare ribs, greens, cornbread, and sweet potato pie.

114 In 1993 Trudier had a slight relapse and took a three-year sabbatical at Emory University. But I'm not sure she ever really left. I was marching in the 1995 commencement procession in Kenan Stadium, and I happened to look over to the left and there was Trudier, marching along with all of us in her academic gown. Anyway, in the fall of last year she rejoined our faculty—but first she's finishing another book at the National Humanities Center.

Trudier, welcome back to North Carolina, and come on up here on the front porch and get your Brown-Hudson Folklore Award.

Sheila Kay Adams
Seventh-generation ballad singer

citation by

Daniel W. Patterson

Englishman Cecil Sharp said that in the Appalachians during the First World War he found himself for the first time in a community where singing was as common as speaking. Many persons gladly shared songs with him, and he may not have fully grasped that his guides were taking him mostly to people recognized as leading singers. We see more clearly than Sharp could the vital role played by particular individuals, families, and communities in keeping traditional music alive. Sheila Adams is one of these individuals. She has remarkable gifts—a lovely voice, great natural musicality, depth and feeling, and a memory that won't let any good song or story escape. Her personal gifts got fostered by the highly musical families within which she grew up—the Nortons, Chandlers, Wallins, Ramseys, and Rays—who composed the community of Sodom, in Madison County. These families have made Sodom famous, out of all proportion to its size, for its music, particularly for ballad singing. Sheila Adams is, she tells us, the seventh generation of known ballad singers in her family. She now is fostering the singing gift of her own talented daughter, Melanie Rice.

I was fortunate to hear Sheila Adams in the first year she went out to perform publicly—in 1976, at Duke University, singing in a program with her “granny,” Dellie Chandler Norton (who taught her, she tells us, much about both songs and life), and with Dellie’s sister, Berzilla Wallin. Sheila gave a ballad rendition that night that has haunted my memory ever since. Only a month ago my wife, Beverly, and I heard Sheila again one rainy, rainy night in Greensboro. The two decades had taken nothing from the freshness of her voice, but only enriched her understanding of the songs and polished her skill in bringing her hearers into the world of their meaning.

In the interim Sheila had finished college, married, become a mother, taught school and performed in hundreds of festivals, schools, workshops, and music camps. She had been featured in a broadcast series with her friend Bobby McMillon. She had recorded two song albums—*Loving Forward, Loving Back* (1987) and *A Spring in the Burton Cove* (1990)—and played a lovely banjo in some of the recordings by her husband Jim Taylor;

he helped in hers, too. She had recorded an album of tales, *Don't Git Above Your Raising* (1992). She had appeared in several films, including *The Last of the Mohicans*. And she had written a delightful book of her family stories, *Come Go Home with Me*, published by UNC Press in 1995. She is now nationally known and widely sought after—and for very good reasons.

Sheila's songs, many of which come from her family's repertory, are beautiful. Her singing, unaccompanied or with her own banjo or guitar backing, is lovely and moving. And best of all, she has found a way to frame the songs for outsiders by telling stories about the world in which she learned them. Somehow she has managed even the miracle of setting her stories down on the page in *Come Go Home with Me*. They read like Sheila talking. They are short and seemingly casual, yet they call up a whole world—not just of the traditional Appalachian community that lives in her memory, but of the human community and human experiences at their deepest.

Think of the story she calls "A Special Dance." In it she tells of watching her grandfather and two other men struggle to move a heavy white tombstone to clear a walkway through a cemetery. She is a child, and this troubles her. With the stones set to one side, she and other people might step on the burial spot. Mama had said, "You ain't supposed to walk on graves!" Her grandfather offers a few accommodating words. Then suddenly he said, "Far be it from me to let you get away with somethin' your Mam wouldn't let you do." He "held out his hand to me as he began to dance a little jig on the grave," singing an old fiddle tune, "Cumberland Gap ain't my home and I'm gonna leave old Cumberland alone." "I moved my feet in time with his, and we laughed," she writes, "and did a right arm swing, our feet now flying above what remained of a man long gone." We carry away that image: "a skinny little girl with brown eyes too big for her face, and with the promise of all life had to offer stretching out in front of her, and the old man in his final days, his face tanned and creased with age, and his eyes like blue-crystal—dancing." To me this is an emblem of Sheila Adams' art. She does her own dances of life—in hand with beloved family and elders, to sweet old tunes—on serious ground.

It is a pleasure and honor on behalf of the North Carolina Folklore Society to offer Sheila Kay Adams the Brown-Hudson Folklore Award in recognition of what she has done and is doing to give continuing life to the traditional arts of the state.

Lula Belle and Glenn Bolick
Musicians and traditional potters

citation by
Thomas McGowan

Lula Belle and Glenn Bolick continue important traditions of local music and regional pottery. Their homeplace, with its cluster of pottery and farm buildings, has been a site for the transmission of traditional crafts and music within family and community. Glenn is a kind of Jack of local old work practices and trader in his maintaining the self-sufficiency of a Blue Ridge farm. Lula is recognized as a bearer of the Jugtown Owens family pottery traditions.

Glenn Bolick has a fine sense of family and regional tradition. After learning to turn pottery with his wife Lula's family in Seagrove, he returned to the Bailey's Camp community to buy his family farm. He makes a living tending a series of tasks that were important to his family and in-laws. He has snaked lumber on the hills around his farm and run a sawmill as his father, Vernon Bolick, did. Archie Green has collected and published Glenn's "Saw Mill Man," a song he wrote celebrating the occupational folklife of local lumbering. The Bolicks plant a large garden, Glenn has kept mules and horses that he uses in farm and lumbering tasks, and the Bolicks continue Lula's family pottery traditions.

Glenn learned to play music from his family, neighbors and in-laws. He sings hymns that he learned from the shapenote singing master of the Bailey's Camp Baptist Church, remembers his grandparents' harmonica and banjo styles, and enjoyed learning more guitar from his wife Lula and her family in Asheboro. He plays fretless banjo on one of the last instruments made by the late Stanley Hicks, a National Heritage Fellow from Bethel in western Watauga County. The Bolick home and farm are a favorite site for local playing sessions among experienced and novice musicians.

A special expression of Glenn's love of traditional ways and old-time practices and artifacts is the Heritage Day that he and his family have arranged over the past seven years. Bolick Family Heritage Day activities include an opening of the fire-powered ground hog kiln that

Glenn built imitating the home kiln of the Owens family back in Moore County. Practitioners of mountain crafts and pastimes—blacksmithing, ox handling, lumbering, quilting, and colonial knotting—gather on the Bolick farm, demonstrate, and invite visitors to participate. There are games for children, and regional musicians play folk, old-time, and bluegrass at the little amphitheatre Glenn has built.

Lula Bolick is the daughter of M. L. Owens, famed master potter from Seagrove in Moore County. The Owens potters carry on a long family craft tradition going back to Benjamin Franklin Owen, a late nineteenth-century disciple of Dorris Craven, who established “turning and burning” in the Seagrove/Jugtown area. According to Owens family tradition, their branch changed the spelling of its name from “Owen” to “Owens” because people remembered their shop sign which lacked an apostrophe. Lula Owens Bolick’s brother, Vernon Owens, has received our state’s Folk Heritage Award; and Lula, whose work is included in the genealogical pottery exhibit in the Museum of History’s Folklife Gallery, has been honored as the Craftsperson of the Year at the State Fair.

118 Glenn Bolick was working on a rock crusher for a highway crew when he met Lula Owens outside of Asheboro. “At Tommy’s Drive In,” she recalls. The young couple learned the pottery trade at the shop of Lula’s dad, M. L. Owens. They remember making small containers for a candle company in their first production work. When Glenn and Lula bought the Bolick homeplace in Bailey’s Camp, a hollow just below Blowing Rock, they brought with them pottery practices they had learned at Seagrove.

Glenn and Lula established their pottery workshop and salesroom in buildings on the old Bolick Farm, and pottery has become an extended family business there. Glenn’s brother married Lula’s sister, Ina, who also does pottery work, and Glenn’s brother-in-law Roger Hicks, although blind, has learned to turn face jugs from Glenn and Lula and has his own business, Hicks Pots Pottery. Glenn and Lula’s daughter, Janet, and her husband, Mike Calhoun, have also gone into business, starting Traditions Pottery near the Bolick family shop. Displayed and sold at the family’s annual Heritage Day, the range and connections of vessels and pottery forms done by the Bolicks and kin express in a tangible way a North Carolina family crafts tradition.



Photo by Thomas McGowan

Glenn and Lula Owens Bolick (left) have handed on family and crafts traditions to their daughter, Janet Bolick, and her husband, Michael Calhoun, the next generation of the Owens-Bolick line of potters. Here the family stands in front of the ground-hog kiln rebuilt by Glenn and Michael in the spring of 1998.

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***Bolick Family Heritage Day**
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participate.*

dwaine c. coley

Executive Director, Hiddenite Center

citation by

Mary Anne McDonald & Lucy Allen

dwaine c. coley (yes, all lower case letters) receives a North Carolina Folklore Society Brown-Hudson Award for his strong support of folklorists and folk arts programming, for his dedication to regional culture and rural audiences, and for his work to create a regional folklorist position at the Hiddenite Center.

120 dwaine is the Executive Director of the Hiddenite Center. He was hired in 1981 when Mrs. Eileen Sharp started the Center; and although many organizations have tried to lure him away, he's been there ever since. He has promoted folk arts at the Center and throughout the region. This is in keeping with the mission of the Center to promote local history and heritage. With dwaine's guidance, the Center accomplishes this mission in a number of ways. There are gallery exhibits of pottery, locally made instruments, baskets, quilts and other material culture, and presentations of folklore, such as a program of occupational lore by railroad workers during an exhibit on the Alexander County Railroad. The annual Hiddenite Celebration of the Arts features a large area devoted to folklife, which includes demonstrations, a folk art exhibit, and mostly local musicians sharing musical traditions such as gospel, old time, bluegrass, and occasionally blues, Mexican mariachi, and Cherokee hymn-singing. Each spring the Center produces another event which includes folklife, a Heritage Fair for the 4th-grade students of Alexander and surrounding counties, featuring demonstrations of pottery, weaving, basket making, woodworking, quilting, and other crafts. In recent years dwaine has spearheaded a tour of traditional music from the North Carolina foothills and an Ethnic Fair.

Not only has dwaine supported folklife programming, but he has supported the extensive fieldwork and research necessary to put it together. He has hired many folklorists over the years. He started with a grant from the North Carolina Arts Council Folklife Section to hire

contract folklorists to work on projects; Doug DeNatale and Mary Anne McDonald both worked in Alexander County in the mid-1980s. Later he had a vision to start a full-time folklorist position using the North Carolina Arts Council salary assistance grant and funds from the National Endowment for the Humanities. Martha Nelson and Lucy Allen served on that three-year grant; and the position has now been successfully established and is an ongoing part of the Hiddenite Center, with Lucy Allen on staff.

dwaine is a strong supporter of arts in rural counties. He is a member of a section of the Southern Arts Federation devoted to bringing arts to underserved communities. dwaine has worked hard to create a stable infrastructure that would support the arts. He is a champion not only for regional culture, but for rural underserved communities as well. He has the reputation of being able to turn out a crowd for a wide variety of performances. Many Alexander county residents who ordinarily attend mostly bluegrass festivals have come to the Hiddenite Center for performances of Broadway shows and string quartets, all because of dwaine.

This citation makes dwaine sound like a pillar of the community, and he is; but when people talk about dwaine they are more likely to talk about dwaine the personality. dwaine makes things fun; you just never know what he's going to do. dwaine stories abound. We could sit and tell stories on him until midnight and not be done. He's one of the best cooks around, can charm just about anyone, tells hilarious stories about his previous life as a Baptist minister, and has a rare ability of being able to tease people out of being unpleasant, a very handy skill for an arts administrator. (Maybe we should send him to Washington.)

Locally he is perhaps most famous for another accomplishment. When I was out doing fieldwork, I met people all over the county as I searched for traditional artists to present at the Center. Whenever I explained to women that I was working for dwaine coley at the Hiddenite Center, they would nod and tell me knowingly, "dwaine coley; he married Nancy Adams, the prettiest girl in the county."

Congratulations, dwaine, on your North Carolina Folklore Society Brown-Hudson Award, for your strong support of folklorists and folk arts programming, for your dedication to regional culture, and to rural audiences, and for your work to create a regional folklorist position at the Hiddenite Center.

Alexander County First Sunday Singing Convention

*citation by
Lucy Allen*

Tomorrow afternoon around 2:30, just a few miles from here, down Old Mountain Road to Third Creek Baptist Church, four choirs will be gathering to share in a time of fellowship, music, and spiritual uplifting. Three of the choirs—the note choirs of Third Creek, Mount Carmel, and Liberty Grove Baptist Churches—gather the first Sunday of each month, and each month they invite a guest choir to join them. The guest choir is not always a shape-note choir; nowadays, it is more likely to be a gospel choir. The note choirs are the last remaining members of the Alexander County First Sunday Singing Convention, which has been going on here for over fifty years.

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The Alexander County First Sunday Singing Convention was started in 1946 by the Reverend D.W. Rutherford, pastor of Mt. Carmel and Third Creek churches, and the Reverend Gaither Dula, pastor of Liberty Grove Baptist Church. The mission of the Convention is to promote fellowship, unity, and better singing in the county, and their theme hymn is “Leaning on the Everlasting Arms.” Reverends Rutherford and Dula appreciated the note singing; and though he was not one of the singers, Reverend Rutherford was the President of the Convention at one time.

The churches that were interested in the note singing would invite Mr. Mayfield of Iredell County to come to their church. He would teach singing and help that church organize its choir. In those days, most of the churches did not have any instruments in the church, so having good singing and harmonization became very important. The choirs helped the members of the church to become closer to one another, and thus strengthened the sense of community and pride among the church members and convention members. As a child, Everette Dula, leader of the Liberty Grove Choir (and an Alexander County magistrate), remembers seeing Mr. Mayfield, although that

was before he gained an interest in the singing. In the early days, people would gather at different homes for their practices, so the children were exposed to the music on a regular basis, and a number of them became interested in the note singing and joined the choirs as a result.

Although only three churches are members today, at one time, eleven different churches have been members of the Convention. According to Everette Dula, the First Sunday singings were much more exciting when more choirs were involved. For him, the singing gives a high, and it's perfectly legal, too.

Today, Morris Newland at Mt. Carmel, Everette Dula at Liberty Grove, and Jeremiah Byers, assisted by John McWhorter at Third Creek, lead the choirs. A number of the choir members have belonged for over thirty years, including Morris Newland, Mt. Carmel choir, Ollie McClain, Beatrice Wellman, and Ophelia Bennett at Third Creek, and Everette Dula at Liberty Grove.

Jeremiah Byers at Third Creek is a relative newcomer, having been leading his choir for only about four years now. He credits the former leaders T. L. Nixon, Mildred Nixon, and Harvey Parker, with teaching him much of what he knows about note singing. For most of the members, the note singing provides a real sense of achievement because so much effort goes into it. The notes are fairly easy to learn, but the challenge is to sing them correctly—with the right pitch, tone, and conveyed meaning in each note and word. That takes years. But the effort is worth it. As Everette told me just the other day, "I can do notes better than I can talk."

So without further ado, I will let them show you why the Alexander County First Sunday Singing Convention has stayed alive these fifty-two years. Please join me in congratulating them as our 1998 winner of the North Carolina Folklore Society Community Traditions Award.

Brown-Hudson Folklore Award 🐾

Our state folklore society's highest honor, the Brown-Hudson Folklore Award, recognizes persons who have contributed significantly to the study, appreciation, or continuation of regional traditions. The award was established to honor two distinguished folklorists and members of the North Carolina Folklore Society, the late Frank C. Brown and the late Arthur Palmer Hudson. Both had served as the Society's Secretary-Treasurer, Dr. Brown from 1913 to 1944 and Dr. Hudson from 1945 to 1966. Dr. Hudson was also the founder and editor, until 1966, of North Carolina Folklore.

Brown-Hudson Awards have been presented since 1971. A citation describing each honoree's contributions to folklore is read as part of the Society's annual meeting program and later published in the North Carolina Folklore Journal. Each winner also receives a framed certificate of the Brown-Hudson Award. Periodically a comprehensive list of winners appears in the North Carolina Folklore Journal as a reminder of the diversity and breadth of the state's folk heritage and to collectively honor previous recipients. Citations for winners in 1997 and 1998 are published in this issue, and all Brown-Hudson Folklore Award winners from 1971-1996 are named below.

1971

Paul Green ~ Playwright, teacher, collector of local tales
Lucy Calista Morgan ~ Director, Penland School of Crafts
George P. Wilson ~ Professor and folklorist

1972

Joseph D. Clark ~ Folklorist and professor
Mary Myrtle Cornwell ~ Promoter of folk crafts
Artus Monroe Moser ~ Collector, folk musician, singer

1973

Bertha Hodges Cook ~ Maker of traditional knotted bedspreads
Bernice Kelly Harris ~ Journalist, playwright, folklore collector
Virgil L. Sturgil ~ Performer and collector of mountain music

1974

W. Amos Abrams ~ Professor, editor, folklore collector
Edd & Nettie Presnell ~ Dulcimer makers, singers of folksongs
Benjamin E. Washburn ~ Writer, historian, folklore collector

1975

Richard Walser ~ Writer, editor, folklorist
Doc & Merle Watson ~ Folk singers and musicians
Cratis D. Williams ~ Teacher, writer, performer of ballads

1976

Ruth Jewell ~ Teacher and folk dance promoter
F. Roy Johnson ~ Writer and folklore book publisher
John Parris ~ Journalist and folklore collector

1977

Guy Owen ~ Novelist, poet, teacher, editor, folklorist
Kay Wilkins ~ Teacher and folk dance promoter
James & Lessie York ~ Performers and collectors of folk music

1978

Herman & Mabel Estes ~ Craftspeople and festival organizers
Leona Trantham Hayes ~ Festival organizer, folk dance promoter
Grayden & M. C. Paul ~ Coastal folklife collector-interpreters

1979

Dorothy Cole Auman ~ Folk potter and regional pottery scholar
Thad Stem, Jr. ~ Writer and folklorist
Rogers V. Whitener ~ Writer, teacher, folklorist

1980

Burlon Craig ~ Folk potter
Stanley Hicks ~ Instrument maker, storyteller, musician, dancer
Daniel Watkins Patterson ~ Teacher, writer, folklorist

1981

Thomas Jefferson Jarrell ~ Folk fiddler and tracher
Mary Mintz, Elizabeth Roberson, Richard Lebovitz & their
students ~ Teachers, writers, folklore collectors

1982

Etta Baker & Cora Phillips ~ Folk musicians
Holger Olof Nygard ~ Writer, teacher, folklorist
Ovid Williams ~ Writer and teacher

1983

Ora Watson ~ Quilt maker
Willard Watson ~ Toy maker, storyteller, folk craftsman
Joseph Thomas Wilson ~ Festival organizer, folk music promoter

1984

Emma Dupree ~ Folk medicine herbalist
Jennie Burnett ~ Quilt maker
Lillie Lee ~ Quilt maker
F. Borden Mace ~ Publisher and folklore study promoter

1985

Bertie Caudill Dickens ~ Traditional banjo player
Ray Hicks ~ Storyteller
George Mahon Holt ~ Festival organizer, program administrator
Arthur James Wooten ~ Traditional mountain fiddler

1986

Adolph Dial ~ Lumbee scholar, tradition bearer, teacher
Betty Dupree ~ Folk arts promoter and crafts guild director

1987

Leonidas Judd Betts, Jr. ~ Folklorist, editor, family tradition bearer
Thomas Burt ~ Blues guitarist
Bertha Mangum Landis ~ Singer and mother of a family gospel tradition
Lauchlin Shaw ~ Traditional fiddler and old-time music promoter

1988

The Badgett Sisters: Celester Sellars, Connie Steadman, Cleonia Graves
~ Singers of spirituals and Jubilee gospel, family tradition bearers
Ernest East ~ Traditional fiddler and string band leader
Guy Benton Johnson ~ Scholar, teacher, folksong collector
Thomas McGowan ~ Folklorist, editor, NCFS Secretary-Treasurer
Eva Wolfe ~ Traditional Cherokee basket maker

1989

Julian Guthrie ~ Boat builder and oral historian
Richard "Big Boy" Henry ~ Blues singer and musician
David Stick ~ Regional historian and writer

1990

David Sturgill ~ Appalachian instrument maker and tradition bearer
Odell Thompson ~ Folk banjo player
Joe Thompson ~ Folk guitarist
Anne Locher Warner ~ Folksong collector and family tradition bearer

1991

Mollie Blankenship ~ Folk art advocate and community leader
Ralph Epperson ~ Regional music supporter
Nell Cole Graves ~ Traditional potter
Charles G. Zug III ~ Scholar, folklorist, teacher

1992

Karen Baldwin ~ Folklorist, writer, teacher
George Higgs ~ Blues musician and singer
Dorothy Spruill Redford ~ Writer, Somerset Homecoming organizer
Otho Willard ~ Old-time fiddler and stringband leader

1993

Mattye Reed ~ African Heritage Center Founder, NC A&T University
Phramaha Somsak Sambimb ~ Buddhist monk, folk art supporter
George & Donnis SerVance ~ Woodcarvers
David E. Whisnant ~ Writer and scholar

1994

Archie Green ~ Folklorist, social activist, teacher
Bessie Eldreth ~ Traditional singer and storyteller
Julie Jarrell Lyons ~ Family tradition bearer, dancer, and storyteller
Glenn Douglas Hinson ~ Folklorist, festival organizer, teacher

1995

Tom Davenport ~ Folklore film maker and recreator of tales
Bobby McMillon ~ Folk artist, tradition bearer, folklorist
Beverly Bush Patterson ~ Folklorist, scholar, public administrator
Tommy Thompson ~ Folksong collector, composer, banjo player

1996

Michael B. Alford ~ Traditional boats scholar and administrator
Wayne & Margaret Martin ~ Musicians, public sector folklorists
James Allen Rose ~ Model boat builder, musician, tradition bearer

North Carolina Folklore Society Community Traditions Award

During preparations for the North Carolina Folklore Society's 1992 annual meeting, Karen Baldwin and Thomas McGowen proposed that besides its Brown-Hudson Folklore Awards, which are presented to individuals, the Society should also honor at least one group or organization in its awards presentations. The Society's officers took this proposal under advisement and created the North Carolina Folklore Society Community Traditions Award to recognize the work of groups in continuing folklife in our state.

Community Traditions Award winners, 1992-1997, are listed below.

1992

Sharp Point Volunteer Fire Department, Pitt County

1993

Guilford Native American Association, Greensboro

1994

Pine Cone: The Piedmont Council of Traditional Music, Raleigh

1995

Brasstown Carvers, John C. Campbell Folk School, Brasstown

1996

Core Sound Decoy Carvers Guild, Harkers Island

1997

First Cosmopolitan All-Male Chorus, Raleigh

**“I’ll tell you what—
It all depends on the wood”:
Making Handles with Joe Willis**

✿ *Ronan Kyle Peterson*

Just off of State Highway 226 in Spruce Pine, North Carolina, lives Joe Willis, a traditional handle-maker. He keeps his community and others well stocked with sturdy, dependable axe, go-devil and wheel barrow handles made from hickory. Joe Willis, who lives alone except for the “herd of raccoons” he feeds every morning and a cat who would rather lie in the shade than in the sun, rarely wants for something to do. In addition to handles, Joe produces hickory back-scratchers and various other handicrafts that are well received by tourist-oriented craft stores in and outside the area. Joe’s handles can be seen as useful relics of a former era of self-production, while his handicrafts exhibit a more contemporary function as novelties for the tourist and resort economy that thrives in the mountains of western North Carolina.

Today most axe handles are commercially produced and have been since the mid-twentieth century. However, the axe, particularly the axe handle, has enjoyed an extensive history, tracing its origins back to the Biblical land of Ur, homeland to the Hebrew patriarch Abraham (Underhill 29). Throughout history, the axe has undergone various changes in design, yet has retained the same function, and more importantly, a handle made from wood. Axe and other tool handles were usually made by their owners, and until the age of American industrialization and commercialism, were important implements provided and produced by individuals for personal use. The folk craft of handle making persisted in rural and agrarian communities for some time, until it became an “archaic, quaint means of survival” (*Exhibition* 461) in a capitalistic, consumer and commercially based American society. Handle making had moved into the realm of folk material and occupational culture, still practiced by Joe Willis and other craftspersons who use traditional skills, materials and aesthetics.



All photos in this article by Ronan Peterson

Handle maker Joe Willis in his smokehouse-turned-workshop, Spruce Pine, NC.

On an unseasonably warm October day, Joe assured Barbera Twiggs and me that anybody could produce handles and the various handicrafts that he makes. Joe says, "I'll tell you something: you or Barbera, either one, could make back-scratchers. ... Why don't you quit work and start doing this and making handles for somebody?" When we asked him how much training it takes to have the know-how to produce handles, Joe promptly replied, "As the saying is, it's according to how much sense

you got.” Throughout that day, I came to learn Joe’s use of the term “sense.” Sense encompasses decades of hard work; extensive knowledge passed down from his father; and the individual inspiration, experimentation and wit Joe possesses as a traditional handle maker and folk craftsman.

Joe Willis was born in 1913, in the community of Altapass, near Spruce Pine, in the mountains of western North Carolina. Joe’s father was “a carpenter by trade and he was a sharecrop farmer. He built houses for people around Spruce Pine and around the neighborhood. Where he could walk, you know, everybody walked to their work then.” Joe adds, “When I was a teenager, he’d say, ‘You go and help me and you could do this and that,’ but I couldn’t saw a plank square. I couldn’t measure. I couldn’t do nothing. All I could do was carry lumber to him.” Evidently, helping his father educated Joe in the art of measuring and sawing a plank square because later in life he worked as a carpenter on numerous occasions. Between 1937 and 1938, Joe helped with the construction of the Blue Ridge Parkway, pouring concrete culverts, clearing right-of-ways, and building tunnels. While employed in this arduous labor, Joe became acquainted with the skill of blacksmithing. Joe’s foreman told him to go help an individual hold a jackhammer in order to drill “pop holes” (holes used to insert dynamite) in an obstructive, overhanging rock.

I never could stand a blamed jackhammer running. ... The boss said to me, “Go up there and help Fred on the ladder.” I said, “I’ll go to the house, but I won’t go and help Fred on that ladder.” I did! And I figured he would send me to the house, but he said, “Go help them in the shop.” So, I went and helped them in the blacksmith shop. Tempered steel for them.

Joe later worked in a mica mill near Spruce Pine, but wages were low and workers were being laid off, so he went to Detroit and worked with the Excello Corporation, making machine tools for automobiles. After three years of living and working in Detroit, Joe came back to Spruce Pine and started doing carpentry work with Hobe Twiggs, using the building skills he had learned while helping his father. Joe also occupied himself with landscaping, taking a distinct pleasure in toilsome tasks: “When I was young, I’d rather get me a mattock and get out in a

dadgummed old thicket place and clean it up, ...get all the old stumps and roots, brush and everything off that and make it look pretty." However, Joe admits in a hushed, reflective tone, "I ain't going to do that no more. I don't think I could." At 82, Joe still goes "galacking" (hunting for galax, a mountain undergrowth bought by florists to use in floral arrangements) and keeps his grounds extremely well tended, while making various tool handles for himself and whomever asks.

132 Joe has been making handles and complete tools steadily since 1951, using skills he learned in carpentry and blacksmithing. Joe's production of hickory back scratchers might be considered commercial because he has surplus quantities on hand and he uses middlemen to sell his handicrafts. However, the evolving role of the folk craftsperson and the needs inherent in a capitalistic society must be recognized. Tradition must not be viewed "solely as a social restraint that enforces repetition of historical habit" (Vlach 302). The traditional craftsperson's place in modern society should be considered, as should that person's need to adapt certain aspects of his or her trade, craft, or skill in order to sustain his or her income. Furthermore, craftspersons should be applauded in many cases for their ingenuity and resourcefulness in maintaining processes that might otherwise "die" or be lost to contemporary society.

Joe Willis' woodworking skills, tools and methods clearly demonstrate the traditional sources for his craftsmanship. Joe's training began at an early age and was administered by his father.

Dad made handles all his life and I'd helped him a whole lot. I would set when I wasn't hardly old enough to go to school and hold an oil lamp for him to make handles all night. I reckon he'd made 'em all his life.

This process of "fireside training" (*Exhibition 454*) both prepared potential craftspersons with necessary skills and provided helping hands for experienced artisans in making products for the community and later the consumer industry. Joe recalls the necessity of helping his father produce sledgehammer handles for a local mining company:

[Dad] was making handles for the Whitehall Company that old man Taner was head of. They was a-running the Chestnut Flats Mine and Hoot Owl Mine over here. Taner was Dad's neighbor...[and] he got Dad into making handles for the miners.

They had started this flotation mine over here on Chalk [Mountain] and they didn't have no rock machine to break the rock up with. They had about a dozen men over there all the time breaking rock with sledgehammers. They would break more handles than Dad could make. He come to me and said, "You are going to have to help me!" I said, "I can't make no handles." He said, "You can make *at* 'em and I'll finish 'em! I can't keep 'em working!"

Joe would do the initial coarse cutting of the handles while his father took the roughly hewn pieces and finished them until they were shaped and smooth enough for workmen's hands. Dealing with more than making handles for personal and community use, for farm jobs and rural chores, Joe's father provided an important service for the Whitehall Company even in the age of mechanization. This reflects the evolving role of the traditional craftsman from simply "producing entirely for family consumption...for exchange with neighbors for other commodities, or for barter at the country store," to supplying a wider-scale consumer, in exchange for capital (Eaton 266). Yet, for Joe and his father, handle making still retained many of its traditional processes and functions.

Before American colonization, handle makers in Europe used ash wood for making axe and other tool handles. However, these colonists discovered that American ash was of poor quality and turned to the readily available hickory as a comparable substitute (Underhill 29). Hickory is ideal for handles because "the combination of strength, toughness, hardness, and stiffness possessed by hickory has not been found in the same degree in any other commercial wood" (Langsner 90). Extensive knowledge of the strength, workability and durability of different woods is essential to handle making. Joe indicates the value of this knowledge in a tall tale:

Old man—I can't remember his name—used to live out here towards Bakersville. He used to dig ditches where there was a swamp or spring to drain water out. Then he would lay tile down in there, and then lay him a plank on top of that. Somebody asked the old man what was the best kind of plank to lay down there. He said, "Why, locust! Locust will last a hundred years." Other

old man said, "Well how do you know?" He said, "I've tried it twice." [Joe looks at me with a little grin] Man tries something like that twice, he ought to know what he's talking about!

Despite the lasting ability of locust (with its tough, twisted grain), Joe prefers hickory for most handles he produces, except for "a couple of hoe handles and a pitchfork handle...made out of sassafras. If you get it dry and keep it dry, it will last you a hundred years," Joe says of hickory, echoing the tall tale. He notes that he still uses a hickory go-devil handle his father made for him in 1945, but also stresses the need for proper care in order for a handle to endure.

134 Today, acquiring the material for axe handles involves more than going into the woods and chopping down the desired tree. Joe gets his hickory logs from the Mitchell Lumber Company. Joe reports that Bud Phillips, the owner, "when the good logs come in [will] say, 'Don't cut that one, I want it.' He'll just roll it back, and when he gets a truck load, he'll bring them up here. ...In a way he gives them to me, but...I make them some handles, [and] I don't charge them for them." In exchange for essential material, Joe's handles help supply the Mitchell Lumber Company and its hardware store.

After obtaining the basic materials for his woodworking, Joe allows the logs to season for a while in piles outside his workshop, which was once a smokehouse. The logs are then split and allowed to season longer. The wood seasons for periods ranging from two weeks to twelve months, depending on the sap content. It is important that the logs are not exposed to the elements for too long, because, Joe notes, "Hickory will rot to leave it out in the weather just about as quick as any wood there is. The bottom of logs that lays on the ground up there two years...ain't fit for stove wood." After the seasoning period, the split logs must be split again into smaller, workable pieces. Traditionally, logs were split using a pole axe, a go-devil, large wooden wedges, a maul, a froe, and a mallet (Wigginton 45). Joe uses a wedge, a sledgehammer, a go-devil, a pole axe, and a hatchet to split the logs into smaller and smaller pieces that eventually are between eighteen inches and five feet long, two to three inches in thickness, and between three and five inches wide, depending upon the object to be carved.



Wood seasons outside for two weeks to a year, depending on its sap content.

Next comes the process of actually carving the handle from the split, rough chunk of wood. The hewing hatchet and jackknife are commonly used to shape a handle (Langsner 91), and even though Joe uses this method, he usually employs a different process. Important to his carving process is the shaving horse. The shaving horse, or “drawing horse,” has been used by mountain basket makers and chair makers to cut out splints and rungs, and can be traced to Shropshire, England, where it was used

“to make spelks and trugs for local baskets” (Eaton 37). Joe built his own shaving horse based on one that his father had owned and used. His varies somewhat from the traditional shaving horse, which was constructed of short, rough logs with the bark still intact, with a white oak knot serving as the central weight and catching component of the lever. On Joe’s shaving horse, the white oak knot bears down on the wood being worked, catching the rough wood against a board padded with mud flaps from an old truck. Joe explains that this mud flap arrangement works as an automatic vise.

The shaving horse allows the carver to hold the rough wood securely while stripping off layers of extraneous wood with a drawing knife. The drawing knife is a blade suspended between two handles and derives its name from the horizontal motion of “drawing” the knife towards oneself in order to carve the wood. Joe warns that “the first thing you got to learn about [the draw knife] is to stop before it gets up here [draws knife up towards his abdomen] cause you’ll rip your belly wide open!”

136 Essential to the strength of a handle is cutting the piece with the run of the wood’s grain (Langsner 18). Joe pulls out a homemade handle, not of his making, carved contrary to the grain and remarks, “Lookee here how twisted. Look at how the grain runs out of it.” When asked if that is how he carves a handle, Joe states, “No sir! [The grain] would run straight with this here dadgum piece from one end to the other!”

After the handle is shaped with the drawing knife—but still what Joe considers rough—he uses a wood rasp, or wood file, to cut down the rough, angular edges. He then uses a piece of broken glass to scrape the surface of the wood. This works the wood down to a finer, smoother level, which will be further sanded with “old, rough sandpaper that’s half-way wore up.” The handles must then be seasoned or dried again after they are worked to maintain their strength and durability. It is extremely important that all the water and sap evaporate from the wood in order for the handles to retain their shape and wholeness, without warping or cracking open after being used only a few times.

Joe incorporates an elaborate system for the final seasoning of his hickory handles and handicrafts, suspending them over an old wood stove so that the rising heat draws out the remaining sap or water.

That’s my kiln dryer [Joe grins]. [Those handles] wasn’t good and dry when I laid ‘em up there. I can build me a fire under here [motions to

stove]. The reason I got these blocks...is so I got this airspace in there [points to opening between two plywood boards separated by two blocks]. I did lay [the handles] down on here [on lower plywood]. It'll get so hot you can't hold your hand on it sometimes. If they get too hot too quick, they'll bust wide open, if they got water in 'em.

Finally, Joe uses worn sandpaper to put the finishing touches on his handles, sometimes applying Elmer's Glue to make the handles appear glossy. The handles are stored around the walls of his workshop until they are picked up by their new owners. Joe sometimes writes the initials of his customers on individual handles but assures me that he knows "whose is whose." Joe usually "helves" (puts tool-heads on) the finished handles himself. His blacksmithing experience allows him to improve the condition of tool heads by reshaping contorted ones or by sharpening them. Joe owns two anvils.

I drag one out, once in a while, and get me a bunch of old, crooked, beat up tools...and just beat the tar out of 'em, until they get straightened out. I'd sharpen a mattock, or pick, or something like that. But, I ain't got no furnace; you'd have to build a furnace out of rock.

Joe's repertoire includes a vast range of utilitarian handles that recalls the variety of handles that eighteenth-century pioneers and farmers made for personal use. "I make 'em all, except gun handles and plow handles." I could tell this was no exaggeration. His workshop is packed with handles that include: go-devil, hatchet, sledgehammer, hoe (or "tater digger"), pitchfork, peavey, mowing scythe, knife, broad axe, pole axe, hammer, shovel, post hole digger, and wheelbarrow handles. Most of these handles are "impact handles," such as axe and hammer handles, intended to absorb shock resulting from swinging and striking a hard, unyielding object. The others, such as wheelbarrow and mowing scythe handle, mainly provide something convenient to hold and control while working (Langsner 89). Joe makes no evident distinction between the two types of handles, except for the types of wood used to construct each.

Not all of Joe's handicrafts have maintained a utilitarian nature, or, in the case of the cradle/scythe he reconstructed, exist as reminders of the tools used on farms and in rural communities before mechanization



Above, Joe works a drawknife on a hickory backscratcher. The block and base of his shaving horse are fixed with mud flaps which grip rough wood like a vise. Below, he uses a glass shard to smooth the backscratcher.



and motorized farming implements. In order to produce an effective handle or tool, the artisan must have a clear understanding and first-hand knowledge of its function. After giving a detailed account of the cradle's use, Joe displayed three small pieces of weathered wood and rusted metal that he had as a "model" to reconstruct the harvesting

implement. "Now that's all I had to go by. Now when you figure that there [points towards cradle] out of these three pieces—I'll be dadgummed!"

The cradle was reconstructed for Calvin Hall, a local amateur historian, who owns three more of Joe's cradles in addition to "every old thing he can get a-hold of," says Joe. Hall collects these items and conducts tours for school children and tourists, exhibiting local traditional material culture, as well as lecturing on local history. The craftsperson's role, in this situation, has evolved from providing useful handicrafts for home and community use into what Wendell Berry (farmer and environmental essayist) describes as "one of the tragedies of the modern world...[making] us tourists of our own destiny...[and teaching] us to look into our inheritance for curiosities, rather than patterns" (qtd. in Langsner xi). Berry is criticizing the alienating effects of tourism and the commodification of stereotyped traditional culture.

Joe Willis is not concerned with what academics and others see as the dilemma of practicing a traditional craft while sustaining one's self in a modern capitalistic setting. Joe's clientele for tools are predominantly people who know him and use his handles in everyday chores. He also supplies local craft stores with inventories of other handicrafts for sale. In addition, his reconstruction of older tools has both utilitarian and educational value while providing him with substantial income. Joe Willis enjoys what he does to keep himself fed and his neighbors supplied with working axes and other implements.

Payment for handles can be made with cash or through barter. Bartering harkens back to an age of self-reliant, agrarian communities, and is virtually unknown in current systems of American economics (Langsner 3), but is extremely efficient for Joe. He obtains timber through an understanding with the Mitchell Lumber Company, exchanging handles for loads of rough logs. The metal tool-heads for most of his handles and some of his own tools also are acquired by barter.

A guy [brought some old tools] up here and said, "I want to swap you some tools for some handles." He had an old meat knife, an old surveyor's knife, and an old house jack. I said, "What do you want for 'em?" He said, "I just want me an axe handle or two." I said, "Get over there and pay yourself." He got about \$7 worth of handles and I got \$25 worth of tools.

In most cases, individuals bring their old tools, handle and all, and make an exchange of the older, decrepit tools for ones Joe has newly helved and reworked.

A lot of poeple would bring a shovel up here [and say], "You got ary shovel with a handle on it? I'd like to swap you this to get one with a handle on it. I'm kind of in a hurry." They'd pay me the price of the handle and I'd take their old shovel and put me another handle in it. I've got, I guess, a dozen old shovels setting over there.

Thus, Joe builds an inventory of older tools that he can rehandle for resale, as well as earn a profit on the new handle. Hoe handles are priced at \$3, while axe handles bring between \$4 and \$5, depending on whether the handle is crooked (shaped for the hand) or not.

140 Most of Joe's handles are straight, with little curvature. However, his axe and hatchet handles sometimes have swellings at their heels, commonly called a "colt's or doe's foot" (Langsner 90), which Joe makes "just to fit the hand right." Axe handles from the 1700s "were straight...and seem to have been common for most of the eighteenth century" (Kauffman 50). The "dog's leg," or curved, handle was not readily produced by most folk craftsmen, simply because curved handles are more time consuming and difficult to make, not to mention that "there is always the danger of weakening if [curves] cross the grain at too much of an angle" (Langsner 90).

However, curved handles were quite popular during the nineteenth century. With the Industrial Revolution, corporations such as Hart & Brother Company and H. B. Smith Machine Company began manufacturing lathes for producing curved handles (Kauffman 50). Joe says his father "wouldn't hardly make crooked handles. He said, 'There ain't no need in making a crooked thing like that.'" Joe's philosophy varies somewhat from his father's and could reflect the changing purpose in producing handles more for sale than personal use. Joe's shaping is a recognition of the greater monetary gain reaped from the more aesthetically pleasing crooked handle and its superiority over the straight handle.

People say make me so-and-so, and I'd just fly in and make it. It'd take me a long time; sometimes I'd work half a day or maybe a whole day on one, but I could make it. ...I can make two straight handles before you

can make [shows me one curved hatchet handle]. But now for just an old regular pole axe, I'd rather just have me a straight handle in it.

Joe readily conforms to the needs of the community, and the demands of the tourist consumer, but still produces the same types of handles and tools that his father did a generation ago. Joe's relationship with his customers demonstrates the interaction between performer and audience, and also indicates the influences of a market society on traditional craftsmanship and the role of the craftsperson.

The process of handle making did not "constitute a regular trade or occupation on the part of the mountain man. [It] was only a meeting of an emergency, an incidental part of the day's work" (Raine 225). Pioneer communities depended on their environment and their own labor to provide "whatever they needed in the way of tools, housing, clothing, adornments, and food" (Davidson 85). This way of life persevered until after World War I in the southern United States, particularly in the mountains of central Appalachia (Wilson 461). With the coming of mechanization and industry, the need to produce one's own tools was replaced with the option to purchase commercially made articles or mechanical luxuries to do the work once done by hand and the hand tool. The age of machines threatened the trade system Joe shared with the Mitchell Lumber Company, nearly ending Joe's supply of logs as well as the need for his handcrafted handles.

I used to make handles for them all the time, but they don't use many handles down there anymore. Used to be, every man on the job down there had a peavey to turn logs with, or cross ties. Now, they ain't but one or two peaveys down there on the job. They do it all with machines.

Joe relates this last statement with a tone of sadness, indicating the effect that commercial production and mechanization have had on his handle making. He yearns to pass down his craft and skills to the younger generation, just as his father passed his techniques, tools and handiwork down to him, but Joe has no children. Furthermore, his high standards for apprentice candidacy are intricately tied to his sense of pride in his work. Joe's personal aesthetics reveal his concern for "doing well something that needs to be done...habits of thoroughness...and a love for things done well and thoughtfully" (*Exhibition 3*).

I don't make my handles perfect; I can't. But some of 'em I can get to look pretty good. I've made a few that has been just about as perfect as you could make 'em, but that's what they're supposed to be.

Joe is extremely discouraged with the haste and indecisiveness of individuals who have expressed interest in learning from him. Of one person, he says:

He'd fly into work. Get one in pretty good shape. He'd rasp it down and then he'd scrub it with a piece of sandpaper and leave it rough....I said, "Buddy, that ain't none of my handles. Now, that's yours, you're the daddy of that!" I think he got tired and quit...It's just a half-done, but it would be because I can't get it finished....When you start shirking on the job like this, I ain't going to have anything to do with you!

Joe incorporates a strict sense of discipline in the transmission of his skills, perhaps because woodworking and handle making are such integral components of his life, bringing together subsistence and personal expression. Joe says that "[there have] been two or three said they're gonna come up here and try it, but they ain't went that far yet." However, Joe says, "They ain't but one way to do it, and that's grab you a piece or two [of wood] and start working." His statement almost oversimplifies handle-making, yet indicates the vitality embodied in his ambition and initiative.

Joe's woodworking serves as his main source of income, allowing him to stay at home and earn a substantial living. Joe values this opportunity and points out the efficiency of home-based industry: "If I go to town, I'd spend eight or ten bucks. See how big of a hole I'd-a been in! You stay at home and work and make a dollar—it'll be a big one. Dad always said you could make more at home than you could anywhere else."

However, crafting handles is much more than a means of earning a living for Joe, it is a "necessary, useful, and practical way to live, [virtually] independent of urban control" (Wilson 461). Each handle Joe produces is more than an object "both artificially and conversationally" (Martin 17), it is a "soft technology, one that is gentle on the surroundings, responds to it, incorporates it, [and] feeds it" (Langsner xi). When asked what the difference is between one of his handles and a store-bought handle, Joe humbly replies, "I'll tell you what; it all depends on the wood." In this simple statement, Joe sets aside his personal training, development of skill and expression of talent to give all the recognition to the material that surrounds him and nurtures his trade.

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Judge's Comment

Ronan Peterson's study of handle maker Joe Willis was awarded the W. Amos Abrams Prize for the best essay by an undergraduate student. Peterson wrote his essay while he studied with Charles G. Zug III in the Curriculum in Folklore at UNC-Chapel Hill. An earlier essay by Peterson dealing with his grandfather, Zelotes Peterson, and Mitchell County ginseng culture, won honorable mention for the W. Amos Abrams undergraduate prize in 1994 and appears in *NCFJ* 42.1, 1995.

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Patricia Sawin, now Assistant Professor in Anthropology and the Curriculum in Folklore at UNC-Chapel Hill, was teaching at the University of Southwestern Louisiana in Lafayette when she judged the North Carolina Folklore Society's 1998 student prize competition. The Cratis D. Williams graduate student prize was not awarded in 1998. Professor Sawin commented on the qualities of Peterson's prize-winning essay.

Ronan Kyle Peterson brings Joe Willis to life with evocative description and well-selected quotation. The craftsman and his craft of making handles for axes and other tools assumes primacy; the author celebrates Willis' humility, industry, and dedication to the beauty of the well-made, useful object. But he does not romanticize, avoiding that perpetual folkloristic temptation through careful contextualization of Willis' work in the history of American craft and of his own community's economy. Willis wouldn't make handles if there weren't people to use them. Peterson's description thus pays tribute to his subject's own fundamental values.

Book and Media Reviews

Hoi Toide on the Outer Banks: The Story of the Ocracoke Brogue. By Walt Wolfram and Natalie Schilling-Estes. Chapel Hill: UNC P, 1997. Pp. 165 + xiv, photographs, maps, tables, appendix, bibliography, index. ISBN 0-8078-4626-0. Paperback, n.p.g.

reviewed by Polly Stewart

For readers with knowledge about the study of language, this book produces a peculiar feeling. What seems at the outset to be a general-interest, fun book turns out to be a scholarly, serious book. What is its audience? Imagine tourists fascinated by the famous Ocracoke "brogue," readers with no knowledge about the study of language. Browsing in some coastal bookstore, they see this paperback's catchy title and attractive cover, buy the book, trundle it home, start reading it. Because the diction is nontechnical, uninitiated readers may not realize the depth of the book's understructure, a rock-ribbed armature of descriptive linguistics based upon classic linguistic fieldwork, research, and analytic techniques. What's more, the function of the breezy language, the portraits *in situ*, the maps and tables, the inviting page layout and typography, is subversive—a candy coating for lessons in language acceptance and a call for informed public discourse about the rescue of dialects.

This book was produced under the auspices of the ambitious North Carolina Language and Life Project, itself supported by North Carolina State University and by grants from both the National Science Foundation and the National Endowment for the Humanities. Researched by a high-powered team of professional and student fieldworkers headed by Walt Wolfram, one of America's most distinguished applied linguists, the book is one outcome of an extended program designed to educate a public that, from the perspective of the professional linguist, constitutes an intellectual Great Unwashed. Even well-educated Americans have an astonishingly high degree of ignorance

with respect to language, their own and everybody else's. (An appendix provides a "multiple-choice test" for Ocracoke speech, modeled upon the very kind of test that is used to keep non-middle-class speakers out of prestige schools and occupations. A harmless bit of fun? Perhaps, but also a pointed lesson for the general public about cultural specificity in language.)

In the back of the book is a splendid bibliographical essay with references, showing an extensive scholarly literature on dialect extinction. The ecological analogy is intentional; the term "endangered" is used by professional linguists whose concern is with distressed languages and dialects. (Owing to the work of grassroots and academic scholars, general-interest publications are now taking notice of these concerns, e.g., "Say What? Preserving Endangered Languages," *Newsweek*, 14 September 1998: 14).

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Ocracoke Island became a tourist attraction in part because of its unusual dialect. Now the island's popularity is causing the dialect to disappear. Should we grieve when a dialect is killed in a tidal wave of outside pressure? Should we try to "save the dialects"? Since language changes constantly in the sweep of social discourse, is it appropriate to try to prevent inevitable change, even if in the "natural" process a language vanishes? The book provides persuasive reasoning, by ecological analogy, in favor of making the effort. The authors are unabashedly for preventing the Ocracoke brogue's extinction. Educated but uninitiated readers, if they can be induced to read this book in its entirety, may be persuaded to be concerned about the brogue. However, the authors make clear the irony that, though outside intervention can kill a dialect, the same cannot save it. Whether the angle of approach chosen by the book's authors will actually make it possible for nonspecialists to get the book's message is difficult to gauge, yet *Hoi Toide*, a labor of love, is a worthy attempt to go beyond preaching to the choir.

Weaving New Worlds: Southeastern Cherokee Women and Their Basketry. By Sarah H. Hill. Chapel Hill: UNC P, 1997. Pp. xxii + 414, 5 maps, 110 black and white photos, 77 pp. notes, bibliography, index. Hardback \$45, paperback \$22.50.

reviewed by Barbara R. Duncan

Sarah Hill has woven a book large and strong enough to hold most of Cherokee history and culture. Her study of Cherokee basketry places the tradition within the contexts of Cherokee myths and ceremonies, the natural landscape, and history. If you know nothing about Cherokee culture and history, you can read this book and end up knowing all the significant events that have occurred for the Cherokee over the past thousand years. And if you think you know something about Cherokee culture and history, you can read this book and realize there is quite a bit you don't know. Scholars from the fields of Women's Studies, Native American Studies, history, art, anthropology, and folklore will find Hill's perspective enlightening and her work filled with details of interest.

"The story of Cherokee basketry and the story of Cherokee women are like a doublewoven basket, interwoven, inseparable, and complex. The stories encompass strands of the past and present, and represent transformations in lives, minds, and landscapes" (xvii).

Hill's sources include interviews with twenty-eight contemporary Cherokee basketweavers. They and their families are pleased with her book. They enjoy looking at photographs of their relatives and their baskets, and they appreciate the obvious effort Hill made to "get it right." The Cherokee welcomed Hill's inclusion of basket makers' names.

Hill used other books and articles as information sources and made extensive use of material from boarding school archives, government documents, and early newspapers to glean information about baskets and basket makers. In the section that includes the eighteenth century, she has painstakingly combed original sources for references to baskets.

Baskets are beautifully presented in many photographs, as one would expect. But Hill also includes old photographs of Cherokee women whose images enrich the text. James Mooney took some of these in the 1880s. Others are by M. R. Harrington, taken in 1908, including a wonderful

sequence of a woman picking and processing corn; every step of the sequence includes baskets.

Folklorists will find many areas of interest in this new and important work. The book's theme is the relationship of tradition and innovation. Through the well-documented details of Cherokee women's basketry, we see how Cherokee women engaged in trade and how they have been instrumental in the Cherokee people's ongoing process of survival, adapting new ways while retaining something essential of Cherokee culture. Folklorists will also find interesting: issues of public programming; the presentation of culture and its effects on tradition; the relationship of the Cherokee people to the Appalachian craft revival of the early twentieth century; and the specific details of the basketmaking tradition itself. Hill also documents "the periodic forecast of the disappearance of doubleweave basketry" (294).

148 Hill's examination of the role of baskets in Cherokee myths shows how baskets are central to Cherokee myth and worldview. For example, the water spider weaves a basket to bring fire to the people in "The First Fire." Selu, the first woman, magically produces corn and beans from her body and shakes them into baskets in "The Origin of Game and Corn." Even the cords that hold the world are woven in "How the World Was Made." Unlike some contemporary scholars, Hill does not reinterpret these myths to suit her purposes. She simply brings to our attention the many references to baskets in the myths told in the words of Cherokee people. Hill extends this examination into the ceremonies that mirror the myths, such as the First New Moon of Spring and the Great New Moon of Autumn, where women, the weavers of baskets, bring new fire to their hearths.

Weaving New Worlds is divided into four sections, corresponding to historical periods and basket materials: Rivercane, White Oak, Honeysuckle and Red Maple. An Introduction, Prologue and Epilogue helpfully sum up the book's major points.

The Rivercane section looks at the earliest Cherokee baskets, which were made of rivercane (*i-hya* or *Arundtia gigantea*). Some were doublewoven and would hold water, and their artistry impressed all who saw them. While Hill concurs with the most conservative archaeologists in placing the Cherokee in the southern Appalachians no more than a thousand years ago, fragments of cane basketry have been

dated to as early as AD 600 along the Tennessee River. (Native occupancy of western North Carolina dates back to 10,000 BC.)

During the contact period, cane baskets became an important trade item and were the way Cherokee women participated in and profited from the era of deerskin trading. Hill documents their interaction with traders and colonial governments. Treaties, European livestock, and sweeping changes transformed both the Cherokee's physical world and the basketry tradition by the end of the eighteenth century.

Beginning with the section on White Oak (*ta-la* or *Quercus alba*), Hill uses information from oral tradition to illuminate the period of the Removal (1838) and afterward. In the nineteenth century, Cherokee basketmakers adopted white oak, observing its use by their white neighbors. Basket forms and functions also changed.

The section on Honeysuckle (*gvna lun-gi* or *gvna giski*, or "turkey beard") describes the changes of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Honeysuckle baskets also changed form and function. Logging transformed the southern Appalachians into a wasteland where Japanese honeysuckle, an exotic species, thrived on disturbed ground. This period also brought the dislocation of Cherokee children into boarding schools. While the schools at Carlisle, Pennsylvania, and Chilocco, Oklahoma, are well known, many readers will be surprised to learn that Cherokee children were taken to boarding schools only ten or fifteen miles from their parents' houses on the Qualla Boundary. They stayed there, with guards at the gate, from September through May, not allowed to see their families and not allowed to speak their native language.

The Red Maple section documents the incident that again changed the basket tradition. Betty Lossiah, from Wofltown, could not find white oak for her baskets in the 1940s. In despair, she sat down on a bank and noticed a stand of red maple (another species that thrives in disturbed areas) in front of her. "I make the basket up and then everybody learn," she laughs" (256). This section also documents up to the present the rise of tourism, the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, the Southern Highlands Handicraft Guild and the effects of federal policies on Cherokee people and traditions.

Hill's style of writing is smooth and readable. The voluminous amount of information she presents always relates clearly to the basketry traditions of southeastern Cherokee women.

Hill has used subtle means to include a Cherokee perspective while

adhering to strict standards of scholarship. She includes Cherokee names for plants in addition to botanical names in Latin. Cherokee words are sprinkled judiciously throughout the text and their accuracy has been verified by Cherokee people who are Cherokee language experts. Hill also uses metaphors from basketry to describe processes of interaction and change in Cherokee culture. While she could have accurately used academic terms like "syncretism" and "creolization," her use of basket metaphors makes the book more accessible to a general audience and also gives us a sense of the Cherokee point of view. This device never seems contrived or belabored, but keeps us firmly within the perspective of basket makers and the way they perceive the world. For example, in the Epilogue, she says, "Every basket is a hybrid that weaves together past and present experiences, interlacing historical processes and individual concepts" (314).

150 In the largest sense, this book presents the Cherokee perspective because of its emphasis on tradition and change. The Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians celebrates their survival, physically and culturally, and they recognize the many processes and stories of adaptation and change that have enabled them to survive. This is their theme, in the new exhibit of the Museum of the Cherokee Indian, in the annual Fall Festival, in the commitment of tribal funds to education and projects for children, in the repurchase and rededication of the Kituwah Mound: they are still here, and they are still Cherokee. Sarah Hill's wonderful book shows us the important part Cherokee women and their baskets have played and continue to play in that process.

***Cherokee Artists, Vol. 1 The Basketmakers.* Thirty-five minutes, color. Produced, directed, written and filmed by Ron Ruehl, 1994.**

reviewed by Barbara R. Duncan

Cherokee Artists, Vol. 1 The Basketmakers looks at Cherokee basketmaking tradition in the context of the natural world, Cherokee history and other arts and crafts. Six Cherokee women are interviewed and filmed while making baskets. Independent scholar Sarah Hill is also interviewed in this thirty-five minute video, produced for the Qualla Arts and Crafts Co-op by Ron

Ruehl. This documentary will be useful to folklorists interested in Cherokee traditions, scholars of the Cherokee, basket collectors, and teachers.

The video is an invaluable resource for educators presenting information on Cherokee culture in general for students from 6th grade through college level. Good classroom materials on Native Americans are rare, and this documentary of outstanding quality makes an excellent addition to present resources. It would make a good companion piece to Sarah Hill's comprehensive book, *Weaving New Worlds: Southeastern Cherokee Women and Their Basketry*. (Chapel Hill: UNC P, 1998.) (Reviewed in this issue.)

Basketweavers has four sections. An introduction to the Qualla Co-op places the basketweaving tradition in the context of Cherokee history and other arts and crafts. In an interview segment, Mollie Blankenship, one of the founding members, accurately describes Qualla as "one of the most successful, if not the most successful Indian arts and crafts co-ops in the country." Founded in 1946 to provide a year-round market for Cherokee crafts, Qualla remains dedicated to high-quality, traditional, hand-made crafts; the co-op now has three hundred members.

An interview with Sarah Hill leads to three sections, each named for a basket weaving material: Rivercane, White Oak, and Honeysuckle. In the Rivercane section, Emmeline Garrett and Eva Wolfe are interviewed and filmed at work making baskets. They begin with cutting rivercane (*Arundtia gigantea*), splitting it, scraping, dyeing, and finally weaving. Eva Wolfe, North Carolina Folk Heritage Award recipient in 1989, weaves a doubleweave basket, one of the most intricate Cherokee basketmaking traditions, and speaks about her aunt, Lottie Stamper, to whose memory the video is dedicated.

In the White Oak section, Martha Ross and Emma Taylor talk about basketmaking and are filmed splitting, de-barking, scraping, and dyeing the oak, and finally weaving white oak (*Quercus alba*) baskets.

In the Honeysuckle section, Pam Conseen Adams and Nancy Conseen are working together to make honeysuckle baskets. The younger woman, Pam, talks about basketweaving as a family tradition, passed from mother to daughter, and describes the sharing of family history and Cherokee stories that accompanied all the steps of the basketmaking process.

In each segment, the basketmakers describe how many days it takes to gather and prepare materials, including roots, bark, and berries for natural

dyes. Viewers cannot help but be impressed with the amount of time and labor involved in creating just one basket, as they watch the basketmakers hack, pry, split, scrape, and crush, all the while sweating and breathing hard—before they even begin weaving the first basket. Emma Taylor, recipient of the North Carolina Folk Heritage Award in 1989, talks about her early days as a basketmaker. “I went to the woods with a baby on my back. Even cut the wood with a baby on my back.”

Visual images include mountain scenery; Cherokee craftspeople at work; the materials of rivercane, white oak and honeysuckle; interviews and old photographs. All of these interweave in a richly textured visual document. Of particular interest are the sequences documenting the processes of basketmaking at Cherokee women’s homes. The soundtrack unobtrusively combines natural sounds like running water and wind with Cherokee flute music and singing. At the basketweavers’ houses we can hear chickens clucking and roosters crowing along with birdsong from the nearby woods.

This documentary, the first in a series, is followed by *Woodcarvers* and *Potters*, which follow the same format. These feature Cherokee woodcarvers and potters, including North Carolina Folk Heritage Award winners Virgil Ledford, carver, and Louise Maney, potter. Each begins with an introductory section on Cherokee arts and crafts and the Qualla Co-op, but each video provides about twenty-five minutes of excellent material recording Cherokee tradition bearers creating woodcarvings and pottery.

Ron Ruehl has won numerous awards for his work, such as the series *Fire on the Mountain* with David Holt, produced for UNC-TV. His most recent documentary, *The Principal People*, describes the history and culture of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians. Sponsored by the Museum of the Cherokee Indian, *The Principal People* was written by Daniel Blake Smith and is narrated by Cherokee actor Wes Studi. Ruehl’s production company is Significance Communications, Asheville NC. Ruehl is Director of Cultural Heritage Tourism Marketing for the Tourism, Film and Sports Development Division of the North Carolina Department of Commerce. *Basketmakers*, *Woodcarvers*, and *Potters* are available through the Qualla Arts and Crafts Co-op, P.O. Box 310 Cherokee, NC 28719. Phone 828-497-3101 for ordering information.

Orville Hicks: Mule Egg Seller & Appalachian Storyteller. 1998
(OH0198CD) \$20 CD, \$10 tape + \$2.00 postage & handling.

reviewed by Lucy Allen

When I first heard Orville Hicks telling his stories in person, his laughter was initially unnerving. It quickly became infectious, though, spreading the joy of his life and the humor of his stories throughout his audience. Orville's recording captures, as best as can be done in a static format, a storytelling performance moving seamlessly from one tale to the next.

The Hicks family name is most closely associated with Jack Tales. Orville is related to Council Harmon and Ray Hicks; and he spent much of his childhood visiting Ray, getting his hair cut and listening to Ray tell stories. But when it came time for him to tell stories, he drew on a number of sources: first and foremost his mother, Sarah Ann Harmon Hicks; her brother, Adie Harmon; Lie-Hew Yonce; and other storytellers he heard while growing up. One thing Orville learned was that it was best to intersperse long and short tales. So while he tells the long Jack Tales, he includes anecdotes, tall tales, and personal experience stories in his performances. The Jack Tales included in this recording are his versions of "Jack and the Varmints" and "Jack and the Heifer Hide," the latter told for an adult audience (though a less gruesome version is told to schoolchildren).

Orville likes to make fun of preachers and includes a number of stories that poke fun at his father, Gold Hicks, a strict Missionary Baptist preacher, as well as more generic preacher tales and jokes. The central part of the storytelling session includes four tales strung together to mock the seriousness of his father and the church. The first begins with a focus on his father's strictness, which the audience was made aware of earlier with the "hardest whipping," and ends in a humorous misunderstanding in "The Declaration of Independence," followed by another childhood tale in "Red Devil Suit," which takes place in a church. Orville follows this with another church story; "Dividing the Congregation," followed by my personal favorite, "The Little Boy and the Pet Duck." It isn't a Jack tale, but it certainly could be.

Some of Orville's tales relate to life in the mountains, such as the hunting stories at the end and his signature tale, the "Mule Egg Seller," which he places in a mountain context with the country mountain boy duping the outsider. One of the nicest aspects of this recording is that it includes the context of the storytelling. Orville begins and ends the storytelling session and begins and ends the tales in the second part of the recording by relating some about his family life and how he learned the stories. He includes where he tells them, and most importantly, why he tells them and why he feels it is important to keep the stories alive.

Orville Hicks' tales have been recorded with support by a grant from the North Carolina Arts Council and Appalachian State University and are co-produced by Orville Hicks and Thomas McGowan. Tom McGowan's superb seventeen pages of liner notes plus photographs add much to the understanding of the recordings, satisfying the academic listener and providing resources for schoolteachers and storytellers. But the true joy of this project is in the listening.

*Order from: Orville Hicks, 2625 Old NC Highway 60, Boone, NC 28607.
Also available from the Appalachian Cultural Museum, ASU, Boone.*

Contributors

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Karen Baldwin, folklorist, directs the Folklore Archive and the North Carolina Studies Program at ECU. Baldwin's friendship and field research with Lester Gay and his windmills spanned ten years.

Sally Council was a summer intern with the North Carolina State Capitol Administration in 1989 when she worked with the NC Vietnam Veterans Memorial Collection. She is a contract folklorist for the NC Arts Council Folklife Office, working with the Blue Ridge Heritage Music Trail Project.

Ana Cowó is a graduate student in literature in the English Department at ECU. She is from Progreso, Belize, Central America.

Barbara R. Duncan is an independent folklorist and consultant for the Museum of the Cherokee Indian. Her most recent book is *Living Stories of the Cherokee* (UNC P, 1998). She did research for Ron Ruehl's film, *Cherokee: The Principal People*, which aired on UNC-TV in November 1998.

Kate Hanser is a former graduate student in the Curriculum in Folklore at UNC-Chapel Hill who researched Hispanic embroidery and crochet artists for the Festival of the Eno in 1996.

Mary Anne McDonald is an ethnographer with the School of Public Health, Department of Health Behavior and Health Education at UNC-Chapel Hill, past president of the Society, and a graduate of the Curriculum in Folklore at UNC-Chapel Hill.

Thomas McGowan is Professor of English at Appalachian State University. Past editor of *NCFJ*, he researches Watauga County folklife, particularly the storytelling of Orville Hicks and the material culture traditions of the Bolick family. He presents talks on folklife for the NC Humanities Council's Speakers Forum.

Contributors

Daniel W. Patterson is former Chair of the Curriculum in Folklore and Professor Emeritus of English at UNC-Chapel Hill. He is retired from teaching and currently working on several books.

Ronan Kyle Peterson is a graduate of UNC-Chapel Hill and, among other things, works as a potter near Asheville.

Gary Stanton is a folklorist at Mary Washington College. He is the Chair of the Department of Historic Preservation. He met Blanton Owen in the 1960s when both were in the military and playing music. They continued as friends in graduate school at Indiana University and as public folklorists working in the South and West.

Polly Stewart is Professor of English at Salisbury State University, Salisbury, MD, where she teaches composition, folklore, comparative mythology, Chaucer, Norse literature and Arthurian literature—all with an underpinning of Germanic philology. As a folklorist she admires the activism inscribed in applied linguistics.

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Colleagues at ECU and elsewhere whose kind, expert advice and fortuitous, frequent intercessions with the computer demons assisted in the production of this issue: Ernest Marshall, Luke Whisnant, Sherry Southard, Collett Dilworth, Steve Harding, Michael Schinasi, Jennifer Haskins, Jeneé Hulin, Thad Best, Vickie Best, David Cloughley, Beverly Patterson and Kim Seavey.





Photos by Sally Council

“Each artifact left at the NC Vietnam Memorial at the Capitol in Raleigh has its own story to tell, yet holds the power to summon countless other stories within its realm. Each tethers a thread that weaves through many more histories than its own. Even the absence of the tale, like holes in lace, is integral to the texture of this communally-woven remembrance.” From “‘Pieces Torn From Lives’: The North Carolina Vietnam Veterans Memorial Collection.”

